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# Alaska State Legislature

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## HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Representative Harriet Drummond, Chair

### Sponsor Statement

#### House Resolution 7

#### Supporting a Safe School Environment

House Resolution 7 will keep school safety at the forefront of efforts by students, teachers, administrators, legislators, and other policy makers. It will help identify potential dangers, unmet needs, and innovative solutions to potential dangers before they reach a crisis point.

Discussion of House Resolution 7 by experts and regular Alaskans, through public testimony and other forums, will allow for an inclusive approach to school safety which will address Alaska's diverse cultural, economic, and geographic circumstances as they relate to school safety.

We know school violence can happen here in Alaska. On February 19, 1997 at Bethel Regional High School, a student shot 15-year-old Josh Palacios, who later died of his wounds, wounded two others, then shot and killed Principal Ron Edwards. On May 7, 2001 four children in the Mountain View Elementary playground in Anchorage were stabbed by a man wielding a filet knife, critically injuring one of them.

There have been successes in prevention as well. In the fall of 2015 at West High School in Anchorage, Police Department School Resource Officers were able to successfully deescalate a situation in which an armed man was seeking to enter the school.

School violence is something we must try to prevent rather than respond to, and although millions of dollars and countless hours have been dedicated to school safety efforts in the past decades, we must remain ever vigilant and able to identify and prevent problems before they occur.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development is planning a statewide school safety convention in the fall of 2018 with representatives of all 54 school districts planning to attend. House Resolution 7 will help lay the groundwork for these efforts. It will keep school safety at the forefront of attention as we move forward to make our schools safer.

Please join the House Education Committee in supporting House Resolution 7.

## **Bullied boy brain-damaged after suicide attempt - SCHOOL DISTRICT: Deal is reached with family of gifted Central Middle School student.**

*Anchorage Daily News (AK) - February 8, 2004*

- Author/Byline: KATIE PESZNECKER Anchorage Daily News; Staff
- Edition: Final
- Section: Main
- Page: A1
- Readability: 11-12 grade level (Lexile: 1240)

The Anchorage School District has settled out of court with a family that said their 14-year-old son tried to kill himself and was left permanently brain-damaged because of relentless bullying that school staffers knew about but didn't stop.

School District officials and the family's attorney have declined to disclose any details of the settlement, including the amount of money being paid. The lawyer, Dennis Maloney, said the case is so outrageous that he has founded an anti-school-harassment group called Bye Bye Bullies and is helping to sponsor a conference on the subject this summer.

Documents and testimony in the case, in an 8-inch-thick file in the Anchorage state courthouse, describe the boy as testing at highly gifted levels in math and science. In 1997, he enrolled at Central Middle School, a program that specializes in those areas. He was fascinated by rockets and airplanes, mastered rock climbing, and obtained his pilot's license at age 14.

Fifteen months after he enrolled at Central, on a Saturday morning in November 1998, the eighth-grader strung up a rope and hung himself at his parents' home. When paramedics arrived, he had no pulse. After 15 minutes of CPR, they were able to get his heart going. But the boy had already suffered extensive and irreversible brain damage.

Medical records from the emergency room at Providence Alaska Medical Center that day say the boy's mother told doctors that her son "has been under lots of emotional stress at school" and "has no friends and is teased often at school."

The boy's parents, through Maloney, declined to be interviewed for this article. They asked that they not be named and asked that their son be identified only by his first name, Tom.

A recent videotape supplied by Maloney shows Tom, now 19, sprawled on a mat, with a stare that seems glazed over and vacant. His mouth hangs open as he struggles to put plastic toys into a container. His sinewy muscles spasm, and his limbs sometimes flail. Later footage shows his father inserting a feeding tube into his stomach.

His family sued the School District in 2000. Among their claims: School staffers refused to work with the boy's psychologist and destroyed records pertinent to the boy's situation, including documentation showing when and how he was harassed by other students. The suit claimed district employees erred by "punishing Thomas equally or worse than his attackers whenever an assault on Thomas was reported."

The School District's attorneys, asking that the case be dismissed last year, countered that the district couldn't be blamed for the boy's attempted suicide or have been expected to prevent it because no one -- not his parents, not his psychologist, not the school staff -- saw any of the typical warning signs.

Jacque Repp, assistant principal at Central when the boy attended, said in a sworn statement that strict district guidelines prevented her from speaking to Tom's psychologist without written consent from his mother, which she never had.

"She did not tell me in any of the meetings that I needed to sign a release," the mother testified.

Repp also said destroying student disciplinary records at the end of eighth grade is standard district policy, unless they involve criminally related activity such as gangs, drugs, alcohol or weapons.

What about Tom's suspensions or detentions for fights or skirmishes in which he and his mother both said he was the victim and, at most, was simply fighting back? Gail Opalinski, director of middle school education for the district, testified that any student who "participated in an action" is subject to disciplinary measures.

"It has worked in the past," Opalinski testified. "I believe that was an appropriate response."

confidential settlement

Last week, the family's lawyer, Maloney, issued a statement to the local news media saying he was using some of his earnings from the settlement to form Bye-Bye Bullies and sponsor the summer conference.

The Daily News pressed the School District for details of the settlement. The Alaska Supreme Court, in a case involving the Anchorage district in 1989, ruled that Alaska public records law requires public entities to disclose lawsuit settlements even when the parties have agreed to keep the terms secret as a condition of settlement.

School District officials refused to discuss the bullying-suit settlement, and it is not part of the case file that's available to the public. The district, meanwhile, protested to Maloney about his press announcement, saying the settlement amount and its existence were supposed to be secret.

Maloney sent out a new statement Thursday saying he was taking back his original press release to comply with a School District request "to keep any settlement, if any occurred, confidential." He also said the earlier statement that he was using funds from the settlement to help pay for the conference was "inadvertent and incorrect."

District Superintendent Carol Comeau, in an interview, said she takes bullying very seriously but wouldn't talk about the case.

"The court directive was this was a confidential settlement ordered by court, so I'm not at liberty to discuss the case at all," said Comeau, who was assistant superintendent of instruction when the boy was enrolled at Central.

an easy target

As a middle school student, Tom limped slightly -- a product of a mild left-sided weakness he'd had since birth. His mother said in her deposition that Tom was uncoordinated and didn't like crowded places. Other people described the scrawny boy as socially awkward during his time at Central.

"He was kind of like an outcast, I guess," one classmate said in a sworn statement. "It was like nobody really respected him. Just for no reason, you know?"

His mother testified: "My sense was that Thomas had been identified by a group of children as being an easy target. My sense was that wherever he went it was easy to laugh at him or poke fun at him."

Some students shunned Tom in the cafeteria, according to statements from his mother. Kids harassed him in the hallways, pushed him and knocked textbooks out of his hands, she said. His clarinet was thrown into the trash. The boy joined the cross-country running team and during a practice run was left behind.

At least twice, other boys accosted him in the bathroom, according to the suit. During the spring of his seventh-grade year, Tom apparently splashed boys with water and they responded by kicking and hitting him, according to documents in the case. One of those boys, in a statement to administrators, said Tom cowered in the bathroom corner looking scared and terrified while the students assaulted him.

All the boys, including Tom, were suspended, according to testimony from school staffers and Tom's parents. But school records describing that incident and others involving Tom and classmates were destroyed by the school at the end of the 1998-99 school year under the district's policy, according to school officials. That was after the boy's attempted suicide but before the lawsuit was filed.

Another time, Tom's mother was at the school meeting with Repp when her son came into the office, tearful, according to court records. There had been another incident with his classmates in the bathroom. Tom had a mark on his back that, according to a report from school nurse Barb Pennington, "appears to look like the edge of a book or binder."

A school employee took the boy to the cafeteria and made him point out his assailant, court records said. Other students taunted him, Maloney said. Tom was subsequently suspended along with the students who assaulted him.

Repp testified that Tom was punished because, after interviewing all the boys involved, it was impossible to say whether he splashed water and thus instigated the incident, or whether he splashed water at the boys in response to being assaulted.

Tom's parents started taking him to a psychologist, Ken Mueller, in January 1998 because of the issues their son was having at school. His mother encouraged the Central staff to discuss Tom's situation with the psychologist. Repp declined to speak with the psychologist when he called the school, later testifying it would violate policy.

"You know, in 30 years of living in the community and calling different people about different things, I hadn't run into this kind of attitude," Mueller said in his testimony.

At one point, Tom's mother also asked to see all the names and phone numbers of boys bothering her son so she could call police and the boys' parents. Repp, who declined to comment for this article, said that releasing that information would violate district policy. Repp is currently an assistant principal at Gruening Middle School in Eagle River.

'he was there to learn'

Tom found an ally and mentor in his technology teacher, Dean Paulson. Paulson also served as Tom's flight instructor.

When questioned for the lawsuit, Paulson, now a photography teacher at King Career Center, described his student as introspective, highly gifted and motivated.

"He was like teaching an adult," Paulson said in a tape admitted as evidence in Tom's case. "He did not fit into the junior high concept of high energy and foolishness. He was there to learn."

During the second semester of Tom's seventh-grade year, he ate lunch nearly every day in Paulson's classroom, the teacher said in a deposition. Tom never said he was having problems with bullies, but Paulson began to suspect that the boy was there for protection, he said.

Paulson found Repp and staff member Brian Hilmes together in a hallway and told them of his suspicions. He testified that Repp said Tom was "bringing it on himself."

Repp and Hilmes, in their sworn statements, said they didn't remember the conversation or that comment.

"Students get into situations where sometimes they bring a problem on, maybe not understanding that they're doing that," Hilmes testified. "I think there were situations where Thomas might have done things ... that students didn't like."

Laura Jones, an Anchorage psychologist, evaluated Tom at his parents' request in fall 1988, when he was in preschool. She diagnosed him with oppositional defiant disorder. This basically means he wouldn't follow directions and was disruptive, she testified.

Maloney said it's possible that Tom did instigate some of the situations that escalated into teasing from or altercations with classmates. Tom was awkward, Maloney said, and "didn't know how to be one of the boys."

During Paulson's deposition, Maloney asked the teacher if he agreed with Repp's statement that Tom brought trouble on himself.

Paulson paused a long moment before answering.

"I disagreed," he finally said, blinking. "But I didn't say anything."

a defeated look

Tom's breaking point, as Maloney calls it, came on Nov. 6, 1998, when the boy was a couple of months into his eighth-grade year.

That Friday, another student pushed Tom in a hallway as they left the cafeteria, Hilmes testified. That push was apparently prompted by Tom's tripping the student, but no one knows whether he did so on purpose or accidentally. A teacher witnessed the incident, but afterward Central staff members were unable to say which teacher that was. So without records, the details of the incident remain unclear. When Tom's mom picked him up at school, he told her a teacher saw the incident. He was sure the teacher would stick up for him and he wouldn't be suspended, his mom testified.

Later that day, his father got a call that Tom would get an in-school suspension for the incident.

Tom looked defeated and told his mother that he wasn't going to be blamed anymore for things he didn't do, she testified. As Tom talked about school -- about a classmate threatening to destroy a project he was working on, about how he couldn't get a partner for his social studies project -- he alternated between crying and not crying, his mother said.

The conversation lasted until about 1:30 a.m.

The next morning, after speaking with her son, Tom's mother left the house for 20 minutes or so to drop his younger sister off at a sewing class, she testified.

When she returned, she found him hanging from a rope strung from the ceiling.

After more than a month in Providence and a month in rehabilitation in Seattle, Tom returned to Anchorage. His condition hasn't changed in the five years since. He wears diapers. He remembers people, knows a few words and seems to find things humorous now and then.

But no one knows what's really in his head, Maloney said. And no one has asked him whether he remembers November 1998.

His dad, a self-employed civil engineer, takes Tom to the local mall every night and walks him for an hour, Maloney said.

"We took trips together," Tom's father said in court records. "He was curious ... and he was fascinated with going to the top of tall buildings, fascinated by heights. He was amazing with his love of heights on carnival rides, towers -- wanted to go right to the top."

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## EXPERTS TALK

AN ANTI-BULLYING CONFERENCE is scheduled for June in Anchorage.

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• Caption: Photo 1: Quote marks\_020804.jpg Photo 2: DennisMaloney\_020804.jpg Anchorage attorney Dennis Maloney has founded an anti-harassment group.

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## Stop the bullying - Three-day conference puts the problem under a microscope

Anchorage Daily News (AK) - June 21, 2004

- Author/Byline: MELISSA DeVAUGHN Anchorage Daily News; Staff
- Edition: Final
- Section: Life
- Page: D1
- Readability: 10-12 grade level (Lexile: 1170)

When Dennis Maloney was a student at Denali Elementary School, he remembers bullying as a regular part of growing up. The bigger kids picked on the smaller ones. The mean ones picked on the weak ones. It was as if some sort of natural selection was happening on the playground and in the hallways and cafeteria.

Even then, Maloney said, it made him sick.

"I was one of the guys who stood up to the bullies, who told them it was not OK to pick on the others," Maloney said.

That message is represented this week at "Violence Prevention Under the Midnight Sun," a three-day conference in Anchorage that explores how to reduce bullying and violence in schools. Forty-plus years later, Maloney, an Anchorage attorney, said he has seen bullying from the perspective of a parent who watched his autistic son be bullied and as a professional who recently represented the family of a boy who tried to commit suicide after alleged unchecked and relentless bullying.

Maloney has spent more than \$30,000 and more than six months planning the nationally recognized anti-bullying conference, which began Sunday and ends Tuesday with lectures by world-renowned anti-bullying experts, workshops for professionals in the classroom and even a public forum for victims and bullies both evenings.

"I don't ever want to see another situation like (the Anchorage case) again," Maloney said. "It is too sad."

### WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Bullying is nothing new.

A nationwide study, published in 2001 in the Journal of the American Medical Association, found that nearly 30 percent of a sample of sixth- through 10th-graders reported involvement in bullying, either as the victim, aggressor or both. In one of the most recent studies, completed in March by the organization Kids Health, a survey of 1,200 children from 9 to 13 years old, showed that 40 percent of them admitted to bullying at one time or another, mostly to gain attention or seem more "cool."

Local statistics are similar. The Anchorage School District conducts a yearly student, staff and parent survey called Profile of Performance. For the 2002-03 school year, about 19,000 of the district's 50,000-plus students responded. Of those who responded, 13 percent felt they were not safe at school.

So how does a school district deal with bullying and why do cases such as the one Maloney had, in which a 13-year-old tried to hang himself because the bullying was so bad, still happen in districts across the country?

Those questions are debated every day, and if the answer was easy it would have been dealt with long ago.

"Kids reflect what goes on in the culture, what they see," said Michael Kerosky, supervisor of Safe and Drug Free Schools, a federally funded grant program within the Anchorage School District. "I think it's bigger than parenting issues because as soon as (children) are exposed to the culture, they're learning all sorts of other behaviors that may or may not be acceptable."

Likewise, Kerosky said, teachers and administrators bring their own experiences with them that shape how they respond to bullying. Those who were bullied as children often carry those insecurities with them into their professional life. Those who were more assertive may not be as intimidated by what they see in their classrooms.

Experts at this week's bullying prevention conference have suggestions on the issue. They, too, agree that bullying is a convoluted problem that will not just go away with a simple zero-tolerance policy. The key, they say, is changing our culture's mind-set. Bullies, we've been told, are simply part of the school environment, something we should deal with and move on. But, just as corporal punishment once was thought to be acceptable, attitudes about bullying are beginning to change.

"Just because bullying is a traditional rite of passage does not mean that it has to continue," said University of Illinois professor Dorothy Espelage, one of the country's foremost experts on bullying and author of "Bullying in American Schools: A Social-Ecological Perspective on Prevention and Intervention" and one of the guest speakers at this week's conference. "We cannot afford to continue to ignore or write off these behaviors. There are serious consequences for the victims of these behaviors."

## WHAT TO DO

The first thing experts will say is that bullying happens everywhere and that the Anchorage School District is no exception. As Espelage said last fall when in Anchorage for a conference-planning session: "Show me a school system that does not have a bullying problem, and I will move there in a minute."

Yet there are ways to make it less of a problem, experts also contend. At the top of their list is the need for school districts to be consistent with their anti-bullying efforts and to track their progress. John Hoover, a researcher at St. Cloud (Minn.) State University and one of the presenters at the conference, said school districts are spinning their wheels if they continue to offer programs here and there and without proof that they work. What's needed, Hoover said, is a "systemwide approach in place that measures pre- and post-indicators of violence." Such a uniform program would be more consistent, less costly and easier to manage, he predicted.

At first glance, the Anchorage School District looks like a classic case of programs run amok. There are some 20 plans aimed at making children less violent, teaching them coping skills, encouraging interactive problem solving and countless other tactics. There's one program that teaches families to resolve conflict peaceably at home with the theory that this will teach children to become better classmates at school -- complete with some 90 books on the subject that parents can use as a resource.

There's another called Kelso's Choice that gives students decision-making skills that help them assess how to respond to conflict. A third is called Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders that teaches middle-schoolers the skills needed to stop bullying when they see it. In fact, Kerosky said, bullying prevention is the focal point of his job.

Nonetheless, Kerosky said, every program has a place in the district's overall goal to reduce violence in schools. In fact, he said, the school district is one step ahead of what experts say is needed to reduce violence. These programs focus on respect and acceptance, attributes that take time to seep in but that he hopes will stop bullying before it begins. Most are funded through Safe and Drug Free Schools; some are paid for out of the district's general fund. Each program is used at varying levels and at the discretion of each school's administrators. District spokesman Roger Fiedler said schools are required to submit yearly plans showing what harassment and violence-prevention efforts are being made.

"If you can get respect to be the common denominator, you don't have to worry about bullying because it doesn't happen," Kerosky said. "I take issue with the claim that there must be just one name and that everyone use it. We're going one step upstream from that and attacking bullying before it even starts."

## SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE

Six years ago, Karen Lauer moved her son from his neighborhood school to Polaris K-12, one of the district's optional schools. At his old school, Klatt Elementary, there was a program called Resolving Conflict Creatively. It's one of the district's longest-standing and most heavily funded programs, providing training in such topics as bias awareness, resolving conflicts and mediation. More than 40 schools in the Anchorage School District use components of Resolving Conflict Creatively, and Safe and Drug Free Schools has provided nearly \$37,000 for it.

Before long, the Polaris students began to tease Lauer's son, "probably for being a new kid and all those things bullies hone in on," she said.

But Lauer had been trained through Resolving Conflict Creatively, and she had just the solution to her son's problems. The real challenge was getting him to follow through on them, she said. Lauer told her son to send the bullies "I" messages, simple statements to the bullies about the effect their teasing has. They are to be said with conviction, standing tall and confident, which is a huge thing to ask of a child who feels downtrodden.

"You're supposed to say things like 'I feel upset when you call me a name because I don't like it' or 'It hurts my feelings when you do that,'" she said.

After several weeks of the taunting, Lauer said she begged her son to just give the I messages a chance. "I even ended up offering him \$5 for using I messages," she said.

Finally, he did it, Lauer said.

"He came home and said, 'That felt like \$5,000 Mom, not \$5. It was the hardest thing I've ever done, but it worked,'" she said.

Today, Lauer's son is doing fine, in fact, he is now good friends with his original tormenter.

"It really was incredible," she said. "We nipped it early. That's the thing, a lot of times you try to fix the bad guy, and lots of times the bad guy can't be fixed. You can only control what you are in charge of."

Lauer's case shows that the district programs are working, at least at that school, Kerosky said. He said the framework of all the Anchorage School District's programs are, in fact, based on proven methods, primarily those of Norwegian researcher Dan Olweus,

considered by many to be the No. 1 expert on bullying-prevention issues. Both Espelage and Hoover espouse Olweus' bullying-prevention ideas as the most effective.

"We have not brought Olweus in to do the training on a school-to-school basis, but we use his content from his book," Kerosky said. Kerosky has been to Olweus' training seminars and said the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program -- the same method that worked for Lauer and her son -- complements Olweus' work.

## NO CURE-ALL

Tracking the programs' successes is where the experts and the Anchorage School District diverge, Kerosky said. He agrees that record-keeping sounds great in theory. But he's working in the real world, where tight budgets and constant school-funding cuts make it near impossible to keep up with programs, much less create some sort of scientific tracking program.

"If you want hard-core science outcomes, researchers are going to say it has to be districtwide because it's the only way it can measure," Kerosky said. "But that doesn't take into account what schools can do on their own levels."

Just this year, Kerosky said, he came up with a crude and cost-free form of evaluating the district's anti-bullying programs that includes student surveys that can help identify where bullying is happening, when and how often. It only requires a few minutes to fill out and is put through electronic bubble scanners the district already owns. It's a step in the right direction, he said, but not a cure-all.

"The fact of the matter is we are not given money in the general fund to set up this elaborate system," Kerosky said. "Like I've said before, it's not that we don't know what to do, it's a matter of having the resources to make it happen." Even Espelage and Hoover acknowledge that most school districts survive on ever-tightening budgets, but they say that's no excuse.

"You must take social action," Espelage said. Parents and teachers must keep speaking out" to let school districts know bullying prevention programs are not the place to make fiscal cuts.

While Kerosky works on long-term plans to stop bullying before it starts, the sad fact remains that children who have not had enough training in treating their peers with respect are bullying right now. There are victims being pushed around every day, and it doesn't necessarily stop during summer break. School Superintendent Carol Comeau said she reiterates almost weekly to all district administrators the importance of taking bullying issues seriously. She also mirrors Espelage's urgings:

"The most important thing, if the parent feels they can't get any change or they feel that the school is not listening to them, is to call my office or one of the elementary or high school education directors. It is important that they not just be angry, that they need to call us so something can be done."

Furthermore, Comeau said, parents can contact the municipal ombudsman if they'd prefer a neutral source.

Daily News reporter Melissa DeV Vaughn can be reached at [mdevaughn@adn.com](mailto:mdevaughn@adn.com).

Event is open to the public

Anchorage is hosting a series of anti-bullying lectures, workshops and public forums that began Sunday and end Tuesday. "Bye-Bye Bullies: Violence Prevention Under the Midnight Sun" features nine experts in violence prevention.

A one-time fee of \$10 gains admittance to all lectures and today's luncheon with Dorothy Espelage on "Bullying and Peers: What Friends Teach Us." Tickets at [Tickets.com](http://Tickets.com), are at all Carrs Tix locations and by calling 1-800-478-7328.

Advance registration for workshops is \$170, includes all lectures and the luncheon. Register in advance at [www.bye-byebullies.com](http://www.bye-byebullies.com). Register at the door for \$200. Lodging is \$45 per night per person at University of Alaska Anchorage. Reserve at 751-7273, or visit [www.uaa.alaska.edu/conferences](http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/conferences).

Public forums for victims and bullies will be 6 to 8 p.m. today and Tuesday at Egan Center. After the conference, the public is invited to join Abused Women's Aid in Crisis for a showing of "Wrestling With Manhood: Boys, Bullying and Battering" at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Bear's Tooth Theater. Information, call 258-7077.

## SCHEDULE

### TODAY

Discovery Theater, Alaska Center for the Performing Arts:

\* 8-9:15 a.m. -- Keynote address: "Bullies, Victims and Bystanders: What's To be Done With Them? Teacher and Parent Steps to Manage the Problems" by Andy Horne, Ph.D.

\* 9:30-10:45 a.m. -- Keynote address: "Bullying and Victimization at School: A Closer Look at the Gifted Learner" by Susan Swearer, Ph.D.

Egan Center:

\* 11 a.m.-1 p.m. -- Keynote address: "Bullying and Peers: What Friends Teach Us," by Dorothy Espelage, Ph.D. Lunch provided.

\* 1-2:15 p.m. -- "The Peaceful Schools Project: A Randomized Trial of an Intervention To Prevent Bullying and Improve Academic Performance in U.S. Elementary Schools" by Stuart Twemlow, M.D., Room 1. "The Provocative Victim" by Marlene Snyder, Ph.D. Room 2

\* 2:30-3:45 p.m. -- "Developing a School Climate Survey" by Shelley Hymel, Ph.D., Room 1. "Bullying and Special Education," by John Hoover, Ph.D., Room 2.

\* 4-5:15 p.m. -- "Developing a School Climate Survey," by Dorothy Espelage, Room 1. "Bullying and Special Education," by John Hoover, Room 2.

TUESDAY

Discovery Theater, Alaska Center for the Performing Arts:

\* 8-9:15 a.m. -- Keynote address: "Child Psychiatric Testimony as an Agent of Social Change" by Gilbert Kliman, M.D.

\* 9:30-10:45 a.m. -- Keynote address: "Bullying and Peer Harassment: Human Nature or Part of Growing Up?" by Shelley Hymel.

\* 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. -- Keynote address: "Boys Will be Boys, But What About Girls?" by Nicki Crick, Ph.D.

Egan Center:

\* 1:30-5:15 p.m. -- Keynote address and workshop "We Can Stop the Bullying!" by Marlene Snyder, Room 1

\* 1:30-2:45 p.m. -- "A Program for Reducing Bullying and Victimization in Our Schools" by Andy Horne, Room 2

\* 3-4:15 p.m. -- "Target Bullying: Ecologically-based Prevention and Intervention for Schools" by Susan Swearer, Room 2

\* 4-5:15 p.m. -- "The Science of Relational Aggression: Do We Know Enough to Intervene?" by Nicki Crick, Room 2

• Caption: ERIK HILL / Anchorage Daily News Bullying is a concern for Michael Kerosky, supervisor of Safe and Drug Free Schools for the Anchorage School District. "Kids reflect what goes on in the culture, what they see,"he said. Dorothy Espelage and John Hoover will speak and conduct workshops on school violence at an anti-bullying conference today and Tuesday at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts and the Egan Center. Photo by Evan R. Steinhauser Anchorage Daily News Anchorage attorney Dennis Maloney represented the family of a 14-year-old Anchorage boy who attempted suicide because of the bullying he endured at school. Mahoney spent more than \$30,000 planning this week's conference. Dorothy Espelage and John Hoover will speak and conduct workshops on school violence at an anti-bullying conference today and Tuesday at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts and the Egan Center.

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## Slasher wounds kids - Knife-wielding assailant brings morning of terror to Mountain View

Anchorage Daily News (AK) - May 8, 2001

- Author/Byline: Doug O'harra, Lisa Demer And Elizabeth Manning Anchorage Daily News; Staff
- Edition: Final
- Section: Nation
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- Readability: 8-12 grade level (Lexile: 1100)

A man who told one victim "Get ready to meet your maker" attacked children with a fillet knife early Monday morning at Mountain View Elementary School, slashing and seriously injuring four young boys before he was cornered by teachers and disarmed by police.

The attack sent some children screaming into the school and others fighting to protect their classmates. It ended minutes later with dozens of children locked in rooms guarded by teachers.

A teacher confronted the assailant in a classroom and used a desk and then a plastic bin to keep the man off a wounded, sobbing boy who lay bleeding on the floor, according to a witness.

The boy "was crying and talking, saying 'Please don't kill me, please don't kill me,'" said Randy Smith, head of the Mountain View Community Patrol, who responded to the scene and helped other teachers prevent the man from escaping the room. "He was ranting and raving and threatening all of us with the knife."

Within minutes, police armed with several types of weapons entered the classroom and shot the man in the arm, leg and hand with a beanbag projectile containing steel shot. The final blow broke the man's hand, forcing him to drop the knife, according to Anchorage police.

Jason W. Pritchard, 33, was charged with four counts of first-degree attempted murder and four counts of first-degree assault.

Pritchard, who has an extensive criminal record and a history of psychiatric problems, was taken to Cook Inlet Pre-Trial Facility and held in lieu of \$2 million bail.

The four victims, all 8 and 9 years old, each underwent surgery Monday for wounds to the neck, throat and head. All are expected to survive, said police spokeswoman Anita Shell.

Cody Brown, 8, and brothers Billy Moy, 8, and Eric Moy, 9, were listed in serious condition in the pediatrics intensive care unit at Providence Alaska Medical Center. The fourth victim, Stephan Hansell, 8, was in fair condition at Alaska Regional Hospital on Monday evening.

"He was really concerned about his classmates when he woke up," said an uncle of Hansell's, Rob Lee. "He's pretty tough."

The attack triggered a massive response and investigation by Anchorage police, with more than 30 detectives combing the school grounds and the school hallway for evidence and interviewing at least 50 children and teachers who witnessed the attack, according to Deputy Chief Mark Mew.

School superintendent Carol Comeau said the district will review all safety procedures at Mountain View and other schools.

Classes were canceled at Mountain View today to allow staffers and children to meet with counselors.

Police were still sorting out the sequence of events Monday and don't know what motivated the attack, said spokesman Ron McGee.

When first in custody, the man lay facedown on the seat of the patrol car, according to Sgt. Bill Kaas. Then he would not answer questions or give his name, forcing police to identify him with fingerprint records and officers who recognized him from a previous incident, said Police Chief Walter Monegan.

"We heard that he may have known one of the students, but we can't confirm that," McGee added. "He has been uncooperative. He is not saying anything."

Children and staffers from the school were bused to nearby William Tyson Elementary, where they were reunited with parents and questioned by police.

Interviews with students who witnessed the attack describe a horrifying bolt of swift and inexplicable aggression.

The man approached the school about 8:15 a.m. while some students were lining up to go inside for breakfast and others were on the

playground, witnesses said. Police later estimated that about 50 students were outside the school at the time.

Third-grader Parrish Rowell, 9, said he was walking to school with some friends when he noticed a man on foot behind them. Moments later, Rowell saw the man trying to grab 8-year-old Potasi Uta. Rowell ran into the school.

Uta said he jumped away and then curled up into a ball on the ground next to a wall. Without speaking, the man bent over and tried to cut him, Uta said.

The boy leaped up, struck the man in the stomach with his elbow and ran into the parking lot and then into the school. He said a teacher told him to hide in his classroom.

Billy and Eric Moy were waiting to be let into the school for breakfast with their sister, Ashley Smith, 11. She saw the man grab one brother and cut him.

"He just came up to him," she said. "He had a knife and started cutting him, his throat."

Then she saw the other brother holding his throat, which was bleeding.

Sixth-grader Kevin Bruno, 12, was playing basketball before school when some other kids told him a little boy was getting stabbed. He ran over to where the man was hurting a boy, whose name he didn't know.

"I saw him on top of the kid, stabbing him. I told him to get off. He wouldn't, so I hit him," said Bruno, visibly shaken.

Bruno threw himself into the man with his shoulder, "like a football hit," and knocked him away. He told the boy to get to the school nurse. The man jumped up and chased Bruno and some other children. Bruno told them to run into the school. But one of the children, later identified as Cody Brown, didn't get away, Bruno said.

"He got this other kid and tried to slit his throat," Bruno said.

Bruno ran around the building and knocked on windows to alert teachers. Through a window, he could see the man grappling with a male teacher.

In one of the most chilling incidents, Stephan Hansell, a second-grader, was asked for his name by the man, whom he didn't recognize, according to his uncle Lee.

"OK, Stephan, get ready to meet your maker," the man told the boy, according to Lee. Hansell was then cut from his temple to near his throat, according to his father, Dwayne Hansell.

As the children ran into the school, teachers directed them into classrooms and offices with the idea of locking the doors, following a drill practiced last week. Mountain View principal Doris Ross called 911 at 8:28 a.m., according to police logs. A great deal of blood was left in the main hall, according to witnesses.

Fourth-grader Pazong Yang, 10, said she was taken into a classroom by a teacher, who ordered the children to get under tables and said she would lock the door.

But before the teacher could seal off the room, the suspect rushed in, Yang said. The man pushed the teacher down, and then a male teacher rushed in and knocked the attacker down.

The children then ran out of the room, Yang said.

Randy Smith and George Smith, members of the Mountain View community patrol, were taking a car to a mechanic when they heard the call on the scanner. "We were there in about 30 seconds," Randy Smith said.

The two men entered the school and saw commotion down the hall in front of a classroom on the east end. The attacker had pushed desks into the door, which had broken glass. Randy Smith said he and several teachers pulled the desks out of the way and confronted the attacker in the room.

As Pritchard was cornered in the classroom, he kept muttering to himself about God, George Smith said.

"He said, 'Everything is going to be OK. . . . We're all going to heaven to see God,'" George Smith said.

A male teacher kept the attacker off a wounded, crying boy lying on the floor, Randy Smith said. The identities of the boy and the district employee could not be confirmed Monday.

"The first two officers showed up, and they confronted him with their guns drawn and got his undivided attention," Randy Smith said. "It

was just long enough for the teacher to grab the kid and drag him out into the hall."

Randy Smith praised the actions of the teachers in the school. "They saved that boy's life," he said. "Everybody did the right thing, and fortunately APD did the right thing."

In the aftermath, police scoured the grounds and searched the roof. Officers with dogs checked the woods for other victims. Several neighborhood kids stood across the street looking at the school, parts of which were cordoned off with yellow crime scene tape.

Francisco Ozuna said he hid in the classroom next to where the attacker was finally stopped. "I felt sad," he said. "I thought he was going to kill everybody."

By midday, Classroom 13, where Pritchard was taken into custody, was still littered with papers and markers and overturned desks. Through a window, one could see the day's schedule on the board: play practice at 9 a.m., math at 10 a.m. A brightly colored kid's backpack lay on the floor. A large pool of blood had soaked the carpet.

Nearby was a bloody print of a child's right hand.

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## **Evan Ramsey's tattered life filled him with rage. Then he brought a shotgun to school. - What happened 20 years ago at Bethel Regional High School marks the first and only school shooting in Alaska. It still haunts people.**

*Alaska Dispatch News (Anchorage, AK) - February 19, 2017*

- Author/Byline: Lisa Demer
- Section: Alaska News
- Readability: 5-6 grade level (Lexile: 900)

BETHEL — The day he shot up his high school didn't unfold at all like Evan Ramsey expected.

It was 20 years ago that Ramsey, then 16, arrived on the bus with a shotgun hidden in his pants. His childhood was exceptionally difficult — father in prison, mother who drank, abusive foster homes — but he and his little brother had settled in with their longtime legal guardian, Sue Hare, who also was the school district superintendent.

Inside, Ramsey was seething. He was picked on, a slight boy whose tattered early life made him vulnerable, Hare remembers. He says kids called him Screech after a nerdy character in the 1990s sitcom "Saved by the Bell." That was the best of it.

He felt hurt and rejected, mistreated and disliked. His family was broken.

What happened at Bethel Regional High School marks the first and only school shooting in Alaska.

On Feb. 19, 1997, in the span of 15 minutes, Ramsey fatally shot Principal Ron Edwards and fellow student Josh Palacios. Two other students were wounded. Many more were terrified. Some in a community that grew closer in tragedy are haunted still. They may never get over it.

Ramsey told parts of his story recently in two interviews, including one at the Anchorage jail.

"The initial plan, what I actually expected to happen, is I would bring the shotgun to school and fire into a crowd of people. I would pace back and forth in the lobby, ranting and raving and yelling and screaming and telling people how I felt," said Ramsey, wearing his sunshine yellow prison uniform. He was temporarily being held at the Anchorage Correctional Complex. Heavy prison doors clanked as he spoke.

That day in Bethel, he didn't expect everyone to run out in panic. He thought he could fire away and keep an audience of kids listening to him tell all the terrible things that had happened to him.

"After which I would commit suicide," he said. He just wanted to be left alone. In a sense, he is.

Ramsey said he is not making excuses or blaming video games, rock music or anything else, unlike how it sounded years ago in an interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper. He is not looking for sympathy. He said he is speaking up to say how wrong he was and to help others, like school counselors, understand the rage that took hold.

What did he want to tell the families?

"I can't say that I am sorry enough," Ramsey said. A correctional officer announced time was up. He said he hopes everyone he hurt will find closure, peace.

Ramsey is 36 now, serving a 198-year sentence reduced from the original 210 years.

Back then, he said, he needed help and didn't know how to get it.

A memorial to Bethel Regional High School Principal Ron Edwards and student Josh Palacios hangs in the school lobby. (Lisa Demer / Alaska Dispatch News)

Kids: Speak up

Around the country, school shootings date back decades. One expert, Peter Langman, starts the modern timeline in 1966 with the mass shooting at the University of Texas at Austin by Charles Whitman, the Texas Tower sniper.

Bethel stood out in the moment, capturing the nation's horror over gun violence at school, a place that is supposed to be safe and nurturing. The remoteness of this Bush Alaska hub amplified the tragedy.

The much bigger Columbine shooting in Colorado — with 15 dead, counting both teen shooters — wouldn't happen until two years later.

Since 1997, schools have added anti-bullying programs. New security measures are in place. Two boys were in on Ramsey's plans and other kids were told to watch for something big happening that day. Schools now emphasize the importance of speaking up, before the worst happens.

"You are not squealing if you are saving your life," said Reyne Athanas, who was the school's art teacher 20 years ago and confronted Ramsey over the gun.

#### A father's rage

Ramsey's father was notorious before he was. For a long stretch, the family was relatively normal, living in an apartment in Anchorage's Mountain View neighborhood and father Don Ramsey driving a cab.

Then, in 1986, Don Ramsey shot up The Anchorage Times. He was enraged over publisher Bob Atwood's refusal to print a ranting political ad. No one died, but he went to prison for 10 years.

The family, with Evan the middle of three boys, fell apart. Mom lost herself in alcohol.

"My mother, she chose drinking over us and we were taken away by the state," Ramsey said.

The boys shuffled back and forth between sometimes abusive foster homes and the mother whom Ramsey always loved.

One foster father whipped his hands with a bungee cord, Ramsey said. The family's biological son pinched and punched the Ramsey boys, according to a description in a 2002 court order issued in Ramsey's appeal. There was also sexual abuse in foster care, the description said.

When the family was living in the Kuskokwim River village of Napakiak, where his mom drank home brew and her boyfriend was violent like others before him, the boys fled one cold winter night, a story that older brother John told at Ramsey's trial.

They were found the next morning in an unheated arctic entryway. Soon the youngest two were living with Sue Hare in Bethel.

#### New home in Bethel

Hare, then the longtime Lower Kuskokwim School District superintendent, has been described as the foster mom but actually was legal guardian for Evan Ramsey and his younger brother, William. She did it for no money, which endeared her to Ramsey.

Reached by phone in Bethel, where she still lives and has children and grandchildren, her memories and feelings spilled out despite her reluctance to talk. It was the first time she had told her part of that worst day. She's the one who hired Edwards as principal.

"There is no upside to this," no lessons learned, she said.

Mostly, she said she worries for Ramsey. He was a shy, gentle boy who couldn't have meant to kill anyone, who couldn't have known that his life would effectively end too, she said.

"If people want to feel sorry for someone, I recommend Evan," Hare said.

She was a single mom, adopting Yup'ik twins as she and her late husband had planned. He drowned trying to save a child, she said. Over the years, Hare took in other children who needed a temporary home.

The Ramsey boys moved between Hare, their mom and others, including a potential adoptive home.

"I took in a child who was living in unbelievable circumstances," Hare said. "But when he was living with me I never saw a side of him that would make me think he would do anything like he did."

She has agonized over what she could have done differently.

"It wasn't all smooth sailing," Hare, now 76, said. The children had been through a lot. There were squabbles. "It wasn't happy, happy Mary Poppins."

Yet: "I thought we were doing well. Obviously I was wrong."

Evan Ramsey appears at his arraignment on two counts of first-degree murder on Feb. 19, 1997, in Bethel. (Anne Raup / ADN archive 1997)

A bullied boy

Hare was nice and her home was normal compared to what else he knew, Ramsey said. The boys called her "Sue." They didn't sit down for family dinners but often Hare cooked and the boys could serve themselves, as Ramsey remembers it.

When he was bullied at Bethel High, he said, Hare backed him up and encouraged him to take the mature approach and report the mistreatment.

Ramsey said he did that a few times but things never seemed to get better.

"I've been spit on for being half-Native. I've been beat up for being half-white," said Ramsey, whose mother was from the Yukon River village of Holy Cross.

He wasn't the classic loner. His best friend was from a good family. But his clothes were baggy, his hair was cut close and he was socially awkward.

Sometimes he called names right back and got into trouble along with the instigator.

The bullying intensified. He stopped reporting it.

He wishes he had let Hare know how bad things were at school, how angry he was, how he was overwhelmed by a turbulent life.

He wanted to shout out about all that was wrong right after he blasted the shotgun.

What he desperately wanted, Ramsey said, was an adult to help him deal with the power of his despair and emotion.

His advice for preventing such tragedy? Pay closer attention to kids and their troubles. Follow up with them. Kids can do more too, he said. It would have made a big difference if one had just told him that he was all right, that the teasing didn't mean he wasn't liked.

"That might have allowed my outlook on things to change slightly," he said.

The month before the shooting, his father was released from prison. Ramsey didn't know what to think or whether they would try to have a relationship. His father had never written him in all those years. "He was just another person."

Abrupt change in demeanor

At least one teacher did connect with Ramsey.

Reyne Athanas was in her last year as the school's art teacher. That winter, Ramsey was in her yearbook class.

"We had a really good working relationship. He was responsive when I made suggestions," Athanas said. "He was a good student."

Reyne Athanas was the art teacher at Bethel Regional High School 20 years ago when Evan Ramsey shot and killed the principal and a fellow student. She tried to get him to give her the gun and surrender. She is seen recently in her office at the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center in Bethel. (Lisa Demer / Alaska Dispatch News)

Then, a day or so before the shooting, Ramsey shut down.

When she asked him how he envisioned a particular yearbook page, he said he didn't care. He walked out of the classroom.

She reported the odd behavior to the dean of students and his counselor. She urged them to talk with Ramsey and Hare.

"Something was obviously not right," Athanas said.

But nothing happened to stop Ramsey.

No one came forward

Two weeks before the shooting, Ramsey made his plan. His girlfriend had broken up with him. But he said no one thing pushed him over the edge. It was his whole tormented life.

He got the shotgun from a rack at the Hare house. It had belonged to Hare's late husband. He had no idea how to use it. The first time he ever fired a gun was that day at school.

He enlisted two other boys. Both were later charged in juvenile court as being accessories. An appeals court threw out murder convictions against the one who showed Ramsey how to fire the gun.

Other kids were told too. Some just knew to look from the second-floor library balcony for something big to happen. One girl made Ramsey promise not to follow through but his word wasn't any good.

Why, Ramsey wonders now, didn't any of those kids come forward?

Athanas asks the same thing. Educators say more kids speak up now, with so much attention on the horror of school shootings.

The night of Feb. 18, he wrote two notes later found by investigators and used against him at his trial.

"I have thought to myself, what kind of damage can a 12 gauge slug do to a human's internal organs or their head? Well today I found out, and so did everyone else that is in school," one said.

The other singled out the principal, Edwards.

"I was told this will be his Last year, but I know it WILL BE HIS LAST YEAR," Ramsey wrote.

That morning, like normal, Hare woke up Ramsey and his little brother for school.

Ramsey slid the loaded gun down his pant leg, grabbed more shells and rode the school bus to Bethel High.

The bus company, Golden Eagle Unlimited, later was sued for failing to spot the armed Ramsey. It took the matter to trial but settled the case by agreeing to pay \$1.1 million to the victims' families.

The temperature was right at zero. The sun was just rising. Around 8:45 a.m., just before the start of classes, Ramsey walked into the school lobby and pulled out the gun.

Edwards was inside, a Marine and Vietnam veteran turned educator. So was Josh Palacios, a popular 16-year-old and rising basketball player with a smile that lit up the room.

Ramsey said he fired into a crowd hanging out at tables. Josh was hit in the chest.

Yet Josh wasn't one of his tormenters and wasn't a target, Ramsey insisted.

"I wasn't out to get him, if you will," he said.

It sounds ridiculous now, even to him, but he says he thought he could shoot and no one would die, like in the "Doom" video game he played into the night. He remembers watching a television program in prison that referenced how the teen brain isn't fully developed, how teens aren't yet fully rational beings.

Athanas, who now is coordinator of the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center in Bethel, was in the teacher lounge when she heard popping sounds. Someone said it was gunfire. Students started running down the hall.

"He's got a gun! He's got a gun!" kids yelled.

She went into the lobby and saw Ramsey firing the shotgun into the ceiling.

"I went to get it from him, to talk to him about it," she said.

Tables were overturned. Then she saw Josh, bleeding from the gut.

"Why did he do that?" Josh asked.

He said it hurt and he needed a doctor. Athanas told him he would be OK. A friend stayed by his side.

Put the gun down, she told Ramsey time and again. "You don't need to do this."

But he pointed the shotgun at her, then took off running down a long hallway toward the gym. He did that a couple of times, running out through one set of doors, then back in through another. Sometimes, he pointed the gun at himself.

Again Athanas confronted him.

"I knew he shouldn't have that gun. He was a danger to himself and others. It was my job to take it if possible," she said.

Shotgun shells litter the floor of the Bethel High School commons where Evan Ramsey opened fire on his classmates Feb. 19, 1997. (Anne Raup / ADN archive 1997)

Fear and chaos at school

Panicked students and teachers huddled in locked classrooms or were shuttled outside, then to the neighboring school district office. They hid in the dark listening to gunfire. A teacher pulled the fire alarm to warn off those just arriving.

"Totally normal winter morning, then pandemonium," said then-sophomore Andy Angstman, who went with a group out the back of the school and onto the tundra. "Everything changed for everybody."

"Where is he, where is he?" teachers asked.

During a lull, Edwards stepped into the lobby to check on Josh. Ramsey came back in through the main doors, Athanas said. Edwards tried to duck back into his office. Before he made it, Ramsey shot him.

At one point, Ramsey said, he was ready to hand his gun over to Athanas. He said he trusted her. She never allowed mean treatment in her class, he said. Then he spotted another teacher behind her. He got skittish and raised the gun instead.

Ramsey started running up the stairs toward the library. Bethel police had arrived. He fired toward the lockers — a misfire, he said. Police shot back.

"I don't want to die!" Ramsey shouted.

At last, he threw down the shotgun.

This is the view from the doorway of the Bethel Regional High School library, as seen recently. Twenty years ago, on Feb. 19, 1997, Evan Ramsey, then 16, fatally shot the principal and a fellow student. He ran up these stairs as police arrived and more shots were fired. He threw his shotgun down and surrendered to police. (Lisa Demer / Alaska Dispatch News)

'I am going to die'

At the Bethel hospital, a medical team mobilized.

Dr. Bill Eggimann, who had a 14-year-old at the school, took the lead on Josh. Nearby, another doctor worked on Edwards. Both had suffered huge shotgun wounds.

"Do whatever you have to, Doc, but I am going to die," Eggimann heard Edwards say from behind the curtain.

Josh was put under anesthesia and flown to Anchorage for surgery.

Neither could be saved. Edwards had a wife and children; Josh, parents and brother. Efforts to reach the families for this story were unsuccessful.

"There are really terrible things in the world. And that was one of them," Eggimann said. His son and Josh played pickup basketball together. "He was my son's friend and I wasn't able to save his life."

This button in memory of slain student Josh Palacios sits at the desk of Jane McClure, a Bethel doctor whose husband, Dr. Bill Eggimann, provided emergency care to Josh at the Bethel hospital before he was sent to Anchorage for surgery. The teen didn't survive. (Lisa Demer / Alaska Dispatch News)

Bethel, with about 6,000 residents, is tight-knit. People often connect in multiple ways, work and school, sports and outdoor living.

"That's why it hurts so much," the doctor said.

The residue was embedded deep. Athanas said she fell into a depression. A potter, she stopped creating art for a year. She didn't like going places where there would be people she didn't know.

Now she looks for the good in life. At the cultural center, she helps put on concerts, art shows and Saturday markets. More than ever, she pays attention to how people treat one another.

Hare, the school superintendent and Ramsey's legal guardian before the shooting, instantly resigned from her job.

She never returned to her office, not even to clean it out.

"It destroyed my life for a good 10 years," she said.

Bethel Regional High School, Feb. 14 (Lisa Demer / Alaska Dispatch News)

Susan Murphy was her administrative assistant and the women were close. She resigned too, a couple of years later.

"It made me realize a lot of things go on that the adults have absolutely no idea of," said Murphy, who stayed involved by getting elected to the school board. She's the chairwoman, beginning her ninth and last year on the board. "I tend to hold my kids and grandkids and almost any kid more closely than I did."

The state responded to the Bethel shooting and others. Lawmakers quickly required school crisis response plans and security training, though later backed off on annual drills.

After the 2013 Sandy Hook Elementary School mass shooting in Connecticut, the Alaska Legislature invested \$21 million in improvements: upgraded doors, locks and security cameras, anti-bullying programs and training in how to identify potential threats.

The Lower Kuskokwim School District, like others in Alaska, has come a long way in working on the emotional and social climate of schools as well as the physical safety features, said Superintendent Dan Walker.

Every child at every school should know of a caring adult at school they can confide in, Walker said.

Bethel High this year brought in the Rachel's Challenge program, named after the first victim at Columbine. One strategy involves ice-breaker activities with students asking each other both personal and academic questions. The more you know someone, the less chance you will bully them, said Principal Ed Pekar.

People connected to the shooting still check in with one another around this time every year. Some meet up. There's tragedy upon tragedy in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region and even among Josh's fellow basketball player friends, said Angstman, a teammate who now lives in Anchorage. One was paralyzed in a snowmachine crash. Another died after a house he was working under fell on him.

View from inside

Ramsey has now spent most of his life in prison. He got his high school diploma early on. He spent 10 years in private prisons. Outside where he says the low-paid guards mainly left inmates alone. He didn't take classes or do programs like anger management for a long while. What was the point? But now, he says, he thinks he should work to improve himself.

His main sense of life outside over the past 20 years comes from television programs: MTV's "Real World," "Keeping up with the Kardashians," CNN, Fox and network news. He has his own television and pays for cable from the money he makes at prison jobs. He has a digital music player and can get songs — he likes subgenres of heavy metal — at a prison kiosk.

He was just moved to Wildwood Correctional Center on the Kenai Peninsula. Earlier at Mat-Su's Goose Creek prison, he worked as a landscaper in warm months and shoveled snow in winter. He agreed to be a hair model for the prison barber training program. He is going gray already.

Evan Ramsey in a recent interview at the Anchorage jail (Loren Holmes / Alaska Dispatch News)

He gets letters from strangers, those who want to be his friend, those trying to make sure he found Jesus, those who want to talk about his crime.

He doesn't get many visitors. Hare never writes or visits. His mother saw him early on but both of his parents died within months of each other back in 2005. He has lost touch with his brothers and desperately wants to reconnect.

Only in his mother's death did he realize the enormity of what he did, how he forever deprived those Bethel families of what was most dear.

He will first be eligible for discretionary parole in 2063 when he is 82, according to the state Department of Corrections.

Ramsey doesn't expect to ever go free.

• Caption: Convicted murderer Evan Ramsey, photographed Friday, Feb. 10, 2017 at the Anchorage Jail. Ramsey, who was 16 years old at the time he committed his crime, is serving a life sentence for killing his high school principal and a fellow student at Bethel Regional High School on Feb. 19, 1997. (Loren Holmes / Alaska Dispatch News)

• Index terms: news



## Village school worker who restrained and disarmed an upset teen is being called a hero

Alaska Dispatch News (Anchorage, AK) - October 30, 2015

• Author/Byline: Lisa Demer | Alaska Dispatch News

• Section: Rural Alaska

• Readability: 11-12 grade level (Lexile: 1250)

• Abstract: A school worker in the village of Newtok averted what could have become a shooting when he disarmed and restrained a teenager who was upset and carrying a rifle, officials say.

BETHEL – A school worker in the small Southwest Alaska village of Newtok who in September disarmed an upset teenager carrying a rifle is being called a hero by his school district.

The teen had said in Yup'ik that he wanted to hunt the principal, said the school worker, Harry Nevak.

Nevak, 45, said he acted on instinct and doesn't think his actions were remarkable. He has worked about six years as a site technician at Ayaprun School, responsible for maintaining and troubleshooting computers and other equipment.

"I'm not a hero," Nevak said Friday. "I just wanted to stop him from making a big mistake."

But the Lower Kuskokwim School District said Nevak averted a possible school shooting.

Alaska State Troopers say an intoxicated teenager was on the school grounds Sept. 11 with a firearm.

The teen was charged with weapons misconduct, said Megan Peters, a troopers spokesperson. The case is being handled by juvenile authorities.

The 17-year-old from the village dropped out of school last spring, according to district superintendent Dan Walker. The teen's name is not being released by troopers or the district.

The incident didn't get public attention at the time, but the district said it wanted to put attention on a worker whose actions made a difference. Nevak is originally from Toksook Bay.

Around 10 that morning in September, he had just pulled up to the school when he spotted a teenager carrying what appeared to be a .22-caliber rifle.

"I assumed he was going to target practice down by the river," Nevak said. "When I went towards the steps, he followed me. I knew right then and there he was going inside the building. Then I grabbed him on his chest."

Nevak said he was able to get the rifle away and hold down the teen. The district, in recognizing Nevak's actions, stated that the armed person said he wanted to kill a school employee.

"In our language, it's 'hunt,'" Nevak said. The teen said "he was going to pissuq the principal."

Nevak said his wife's uncle showed up, grabbed the rifle and called for the village police officer, who took custody of the teen. But there is no jail in Newtok and the teen got away.

The village of about 350 people is eroding and public facilities there have been deteriorating for years. Nevak said he spotted the youth and helped restrain him in the tribal council building until troopers arrived.

Susan Murphy, the Lower Kuskokwim School Board president, said someone might have died "if not for the fast acting and thinking of Mr. Nevak."

At the board meeting Friday, she presented him with a proclamation recognizing him "as a hero for his selfless act of courage in averting another possible school shooting and the possible loss of life."

The district flew Nevak and his wife, Myra, into Bethel for the recognition. Myra said people in the village just help one another.

Nevak said he was anxious to return home.

Only later did Nevak think about how bad it might have been. His own children, ages 12 and 13, go to Newtok's school.

"I wish it didn't happen," he said.

• Caption: Myra and husband Harry Nevak of Newtok are in Bethel on Friday, Oct. 30, 2015. Harry Nevak on Friday was recognized by the Lower Kuskokwim School Board for actions in September to disarm and restrain an upset teenager with a rifle at the school in Newtok.  
Lisa Demer

• Index terms: news

• Record: 36ddad237243cb92ccf1245fe4e1dc80

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## Round 'em up: Event tests driving skills of Alaska bus drivers

*Peninsula Clarion, The (Kenai, AK) - May 18, 2010*

• Author/Byline: DANTE PETRI

• Section: News

• Readability: 9-12 grade level (Lexile: 1150)

"Parallel parking a bus with only 6 feet of clearance is just a little difficult," according to Tigger Newman, of Kenai.

While it's not a feat many bus drivers attempt on a day-to-day basis, it was just one of 10 challenges for the 20 drivers Sunday at the State School Bus Safety Competition, or the bus "roadeo."

The annual event moves around the state from year to year, and was held at Skyview High School this past weekend.

Drivers, who qualified at regional competitions, came from Fairbanks, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula.

The event started Saturday with a driver knowledge exam and a driver pre-trip exam, according to Brad Rogers, the location safety manager for First Student in Soldotna, who helped to coordinate the competition.

Competitors had 30 minutes to complete each of the written exams.

On Sunday, the rubber hit the road with the driving portion of the competition.

A weaving course with different tasks and obstacles was set up in the school's parking lot. Drivers had 15 minutes to finish the course.

Some of the events were individually timed, as well, and points were taken off for bumping barriers or not getting close enough to markers.

Rogers said that on average most drivers were taking the whole of the 15-minute limit to get through the course.

He said drivers take what would have otherwise been a day off to participate in an event like this to prove to themselves that they're the best and safest bus driver they can be.

"I think that's what it takes and that's why they do it," he said.

There's also a shot at competing in a national event later in the year. The winner of Sunday's event is eligible to advance.

A trophy is awarded to first, second and third places, as well as a prize for rookie.

As is traditional with another competition popular in Alaska, the contestant in last place gets a red lantern.

For the contestants, the event tests their skills as drivers in a controlled environment, compared to the one they're used to on a day-to-day basis.

Newman, who started driving a bus in the spring of 2008, competed in her first local competition only a few weeks after getting behind the wheel, winning the rookie prize.

She went on to compete in the state competition that year, taking 18th out of 38 with only two months and change in experience.

This was her second roadeo.

"I'm a competitor," she said, laughing. "But I don't let it stress me out. It's supposed to be fun."

Newman said the student load and the railroad track events are easy and fairly common to everyday driving.

"The ones that actually take skill, are the ones that are more difficult," she said. "Like threading the bus through the diminishing alleyway where you only have 2 inches of clearance at the end. That takes skill to make sure the bus is straight."

The offset alleyway and the straight-line events also push a driver's handling prowess, she said.

Before she's waved through the start, Newman said she gets into her zone.

"You need to focus on relaxing for one thing," she said. "And I need to remember the sequence of events."

The "sequence" is the array of safety lights and procedures she must engage to signal to other drivers and children so that everyone stays safe.

Additionally, she needs to have a good sense of her vehicle.

"When you're looking back 40 feet, in a mirror, you don't know where the back of that bus is," she said. "You have to get a reference point back there to know when to stop."

First up on the course is a backup, where drivers have to park their buses backward into a stall marked by cones, inching as close to the back of the stall as they can without hitting the barrier.

The drivers had three minutes to complete this challenge.

Next they did a curb stop, a maneuver commonly seen at pickup and drop-off points at schools, where drivers had to pull as close as possible to a marked curb without going over it.

The third obstacle was likely the hardest -- the parallel park.

Drivers had to squeeze their buses into a parking spot, set off by cones, that was 36-feet long, or a bus length plus 6 feet, in a set amount of time.

They were then measured from the farthest point of the tires to the curb, with the aim of getting as close to the curb as possible without hitting a cone.

Next up is a student load.

Rogers said this event is critical because it tests the driver's ability to go through the proper safety procedures when picking up a student from a stop.

After the load drivers do another largely safety-based obstacle -- a railroad crossing.

Drivers are judged by their adherence to following proper procedure before crossing the marked tracks.

Next up was the right-hand turn.

Drivers were tasked with making as tight a turn as possible by running their rear tires over two set boards at each end of the turn, without hitting the curb midway.

Next they went through an offset alley -- two 10-foot wide corridors offset by a bus length plus one. The driver had to negotiate the two "alleys" without striking either, which is challenging, as drivers must try and turn to make it down the second alley without swinging out their tail end, which is still in the first alley.

Straight out of the alleyway, the drivers had to go down a diminishing clearance alleyway, where drivers enter a straight corridor that becomes progressively narrower.

The driver makes a U-turn once out of the corridor and heads for the straight-line event.

Here, sets of tennis balls set off of the ground on small risers are lined up to the width of the rear dual tires. Drivers must try and drive their bus through without running over or knocking over any of the balls.

Finally, drivers come to the stop line event, trying to come as close to a marked stop line with their bumper as possible.

When they put their bus in park and sound their horn, the timers stop.

While Newman had a little trouble getting into the parallel parking spot, she was otherwise happy with her handling and performance when she got to the finish line.

She admitted, though, that most of the events are more of a test than a representation of reality.

Parallel parking, driving through narrow alleyways or keeping the wheels in such a confined space are unlikely challenges on the regular routes of the Kenai Peninsula.

On the other hand, Newman pointed out that the backup, the tight right-hand corner and keeping kids safe both on and off the bus are everyday events.

The real rodeo, though, is on the streets.

"The whole world is out there, and you've got to keep focused on all of it," Newman said.

"A bus driver's responsibility is so vast, and people don't realize it. They have to keep track of every student on the bus, what they're doing, all of the traffic that's driving beside them, all the pedestrians beside them, they have to make sure their bus is running correctly and still have the skills to maintain and keep it on the road."

School bus safety competition result

First: Robert Parrish, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District.

Second: James Smith, Fairbanks School District.

Third: Tigger Newman, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.

Rookie: David Ganley, KPBSD.

• Caption: A school bus driver navigates the straight line event at the State School Bus Safety Competition, or the bus "rodeo," held at Skyview High School on Sunday. The straight line was one of 10 obstacles the 20 contestants had to maneuver through as part of the course set up in the school's parking lot. Tigger Newman, of Kenai, is reflected in the rearview mirror of a school bus as she negotiates an obstacle as part of the State School Bus Safety Competition, or the bus "rodeo," held at Skyview High School.

• Record: [6d3d62b8ba8f988205763c8fa6d5df9ecc331c](#)

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years old.

Since the start of the 21st century there have already been 13 incidents involving lone shooters; they have killed 66 people and injured 81 others.

"In less than 18 years, we have already seen more deaths related to school shootings than in the whole 20th century. One alarming trend is that the overwhelming majority of 21st-century shooters were adolescents, suggesting that it is now easier for them to access guns, and that they more frequently suffer from mental health issues or limited conflict resolution skills," says Katsiyannis.

The authors explain that such violence can be mitigated through deliberate and sensible policy and legislative actions. These include expanded background checks of potential gun owners, and a ban on assault weapons. Mental health issues among adolescent students and adults should also be addressed more thoroughly. School personnel should also implement tiered models of support and school-based mental health services to support students' social, emotional, and behavioral well-being and prevent school violence.

"Preventative efforts not only require policy and legislative action but increased and targeted funding across federal, state, local and private sectors," adds Katsiyannis.

#### Story Source:

Materials provided by **Springer**. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

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#### Journal Reference:

1. Antonis Katsiyannis, Denise K. Whitford, Robin Parks Ennis. **Historical Examination of United States Intentional Mass School Shootings in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Implications for Students, Schools, and Society**. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 2018; DOI: 10.1007/s10826-018-1096-2

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Springer. "Rapid rise in mass school shootings in the United States, study shows: Researchers call for action to address worrying increase in the number of mass school shootings in past two decades." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 19 April 2018. <[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/04/180419131025.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/04/180419131025.htm)>.

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# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & EARLY DEVELOPMENT

## RECENT, CURRENT, AND PLANNED EFFORTS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL SAFETY

### Recent Efforts

#### **Emergency Operations Plan Technical Assistance**

In 2014, DEED received the School Emergency Management Program Grant from the US Department of Education. This grant facilitated a successful partnership between DEED and the State's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) to provide new training, tools and technical assistance opportunities to Alaska school districts based on the federal Guide to Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans. Between 2015 and 2017 DEED increased the number of districts with high quality district emergency operations plans by training and working with 17 of the 54 school districts in Alaska who responded to a statewide invitation for assistance developing or revising their districts emergency plans.

#### **Alaska School Emergency Operations Plan Guidebook and Template**

DEED in collaboration with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, worked with stakeholders from across the state to develop a guidebook and template that school districts in Alaska could use to develop an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) or update their existing EOP's. The template has specific considerations for the unique challenges and circumstances that school districts in many Alaskan communities face with regards to School Emergency Preparedness and Management.

### Current Efforts

#### **Alaska Education Challenge**

The Alaska Education Challenge has established "Cultivating Safety and Well-Being" as one of 3 of its guiding commitments for education in Alaska. The "Cultivating Safety and Well-Being" commitment will overlay all of DEED's work, and fully intersect with its efforts to advance the other 2 commitments in the coming years. In addition, DEED will promote the Education Challenge's School Safety and Well-Being specific goals of helping all schools become trauma engaged, establishing a more positive school climate for all staff and students, and ensuring the physical and mental health needs of all students are addressed by providing direct access to school nursing and counseling services.

#### **Youth Mental Health First Aid**

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) is a nationally acclaimed evidence-based training designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to informally assess and help or direct to professional help, any adolescent (age 12-18) who may be experiencing a mental health issue like suicidality, substance abuse, anxiety, depression, etc.. DEED has been working in partnership with the Alaska Training Cooperative to offer YMHFA trainings to school personnel and community partners since 2015 and has already trained more than 3000 Alaskans to be Youth Mental Health First Aiders.

#### **Superintendent Letter**

On February 25, 2018 Commissioner Johnson sent a letter to all Superintendents in response to the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The letter served as an opportunity for DEED to remind and highlight the available school crisis response preparedness resources and responsibilities for districts in Alaska.

## **Recommendations on Student Walkouts**

On March 9, 2018 Commissioner Johnson provided Superintendents with a courtesy document outlining recommendations for how to handle Student Walkouts. The recommendations put together by DEED were an adaptation of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) model guidance. Our hope is that this resource will be useful to districts both immediately, should students engage in walkouts in response to Parkland, and also into the foreseeable future as our students involve themselves in other important civic issues.

## **Grants Supporting School Safety**

DEED manages state funded school safety initiatives in partnership with the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council and from Behavioral Health, as well as federally supported initiatives from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Project AWARE and from the US Department of Education's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)'s Title IV Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants.

## **UPCOMING/PLANNED EFFORTS**

### **School Safety Gap Analysis**

DEED staff will conduct a gap analysis of current school safety efforts and needs. The gap analysis will create a state profile of Alaska's current school safety/emergency response preparedness that will be instrumental in determining if our school safety efforts need to be expanded. If so, the gap analysis will help inform Alaska about which of the elements that comprise comprehensive school safety are in need of strengthening. The results will inform the state's efforts to enhance school safety.

### **Researching other Nationally Recognized State School Safety Models**

DEED will attend Indiana's annual School Safety Conference in May at the recommendation of the Council of Chief State School Officers and by invitation by the Indiana Department of Education. Indiana, by statute, conducts a robust statewide school safety conference annually that includes designated school safety specialists from every district. This event ensures every district has certified safety experts with training on best practices. DEED will utilize what it learns to inform its fall statewide school safety conference.

### **School Safety and Well-Being Summit**

DEED is in the initial stages of planning a convening for key stakeholders involved in school safety both locally and statewide. The gathering is tentatively planned for the fall of 2018, and will serve as a space to bring together educational stakeholders from across the state to bolster school safety. DEED, in partnership with other state departments and key stakeholders, will convene the School Safety and Well-Being Summit that includes school safety teams from every district in the state.

### **Training for Students**

DEED will develop a training resource for schools to enhance student engagement in school safety. This resource will teach students strategies and create safer schools and emphasize their roles and responsibilities in this process. It will encourage students to speak up when they have concerns around school safety and hear of any potential threats of harm. DEED will make this resource available to districts at no cost.

### **Updates to DEED's School Safety and Emergency Management Webpage**

DEED's school health and safety team is in the process of updating the School Safety and Emergency Management page of the department's website. The updates will better organize the state and national resources available to districts around a variety of school emergency related topics.

## Family Engagement

Alaska will be among 7 states joining a state consortium on family engagement. The Council of Chief State School Officers, in partnership with strategic agencies, will engage the leading experts in family engagement research and practice to assist participating state departments of education in strengthening their family engagement practices and programming. DEED will integrate school safety into this body of work as we understand family involvement must be a cornerstone of any comprehensive effort to bolster student safety.

## Opportunities emerging in Congress' 2018 Budget

### ESSA Expansion of Title IV Part A

The Every Student Succeeds Act Title IV Part A Student Supports and Academic Enrichment Grant Program: Congress just released its 2018 budget which increased Title IV Part A program funding from \$400 million to \$1.1 billion. This should result in an increase of several million dollars for Alaska. Districts can use a significant portion of their Title IV Part A funding for school safety issues like: crisis management, conflict resolution, school based mental health services, trauma-engaged schools, suicide prevention, bullying prevention, and school counseling services. DEED will also see a modest increase in the funding it receives to administer state level Title IV Part A activities which can be safety related.

### STOP School Violence Act 2018

The STOP School Violence Act 2018 will create new competitive school safety grant opportunities for DEED to pursue. Congress included \$75 million dollars in the 2018 fiscal year and authorized \$100 million for the years 2019-2028. (Some funding will be administered by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and some by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.) DEED will pursue any state level school funding opportunities it is eligible for. Identified uses for funding include training for school personnel and students to prevent student violence against others and self, the development and operation of anonymous reporting systems for threats of school violence, the development of school threat assessment and intervention teams, specialized training for school officials in responding to mental health crises, coordination with local law enforcement, training for law enforcement officers, and more.

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2018 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HR 7  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: HR7-HEDU 04.27.2018  
Title: SUPPORTING A SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT  
Sponsor: EDUCATION  
Requester: House Education

Department:  
Appropriation:  
Allocation:  
OMB Component Number: 0

**Expenditures/Revenues**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2019 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2019 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>								
Personal Services								
Travel								
Services								
Commodities								
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits								
Miscellaneous								
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Fund Source (Operating Only)**

None							
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Positions**

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

**Change in Revenues**

None							
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2018) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*  
*(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2019) cost:** 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*  
*(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

**ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS**

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency?  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

**Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:**

Initial version - 1 page fiscal note

Prepared By: Representative Drummond  
House Education Committee

Phone: (907)465-3875  
Date: 04/27/2018

# Keeping Schools Safe

A School Safety Review published by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District



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## 1.0 Purpose

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Schools have a responsibility to protect the physical and psychological well-being of their students and staff. This includes creating positive school climates, preventing negative behaviors such as bullying and harassment, and being prepared to respond to potential threats such as weather emergencies, fires, and acts of violence. Recent school shootings have heightened attention to the need for schools to be prepared to prevent and respond to school violence.

This review provides a summary of various school safety protocols and procedures in place at all Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) schools. The review outlines important strategies and initiatives that will continue to keep schools safe for students, staff, and the community at large. The efforts outlined within this review intend to prevent violence and crime in schools and establish a consistently safe and supportive environment that cultivates student success.

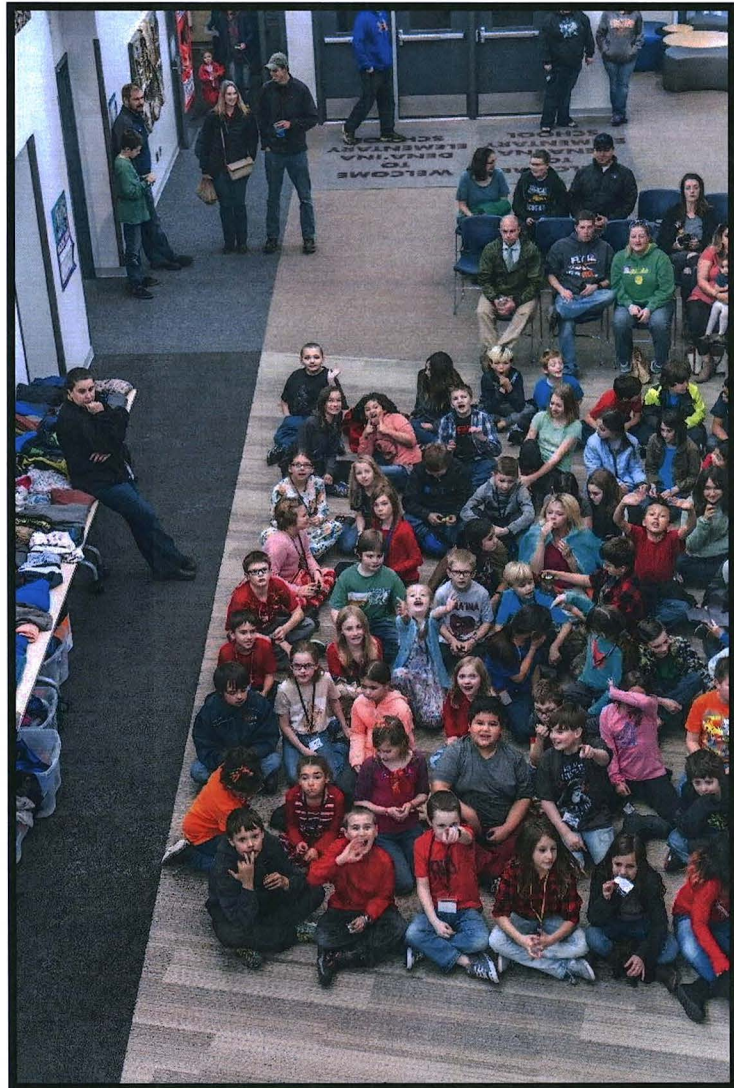
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## 2.0 Review Outline

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This review will begin by providing an overview of past efforts that MSBSD has taken to improve school safety and to inform the community on where we stand as a District today. The review highlights ongoing efforts to improve upon existing systems. Finally, the review will discuss potential future changes and efforts to continue the conversation about what else we can or should do as a District to improve school safety.

MSBSD is continuously evaluating processes, procedures, and needs and implementing incremental changes as appropriate. With this in mind, the review divides efforts into two areas: initiatives and programs that **prevent** school violence and those programs and plans that aim to **prepare** in the event of an incident.



# Perspective on Safe and Healthy Schools

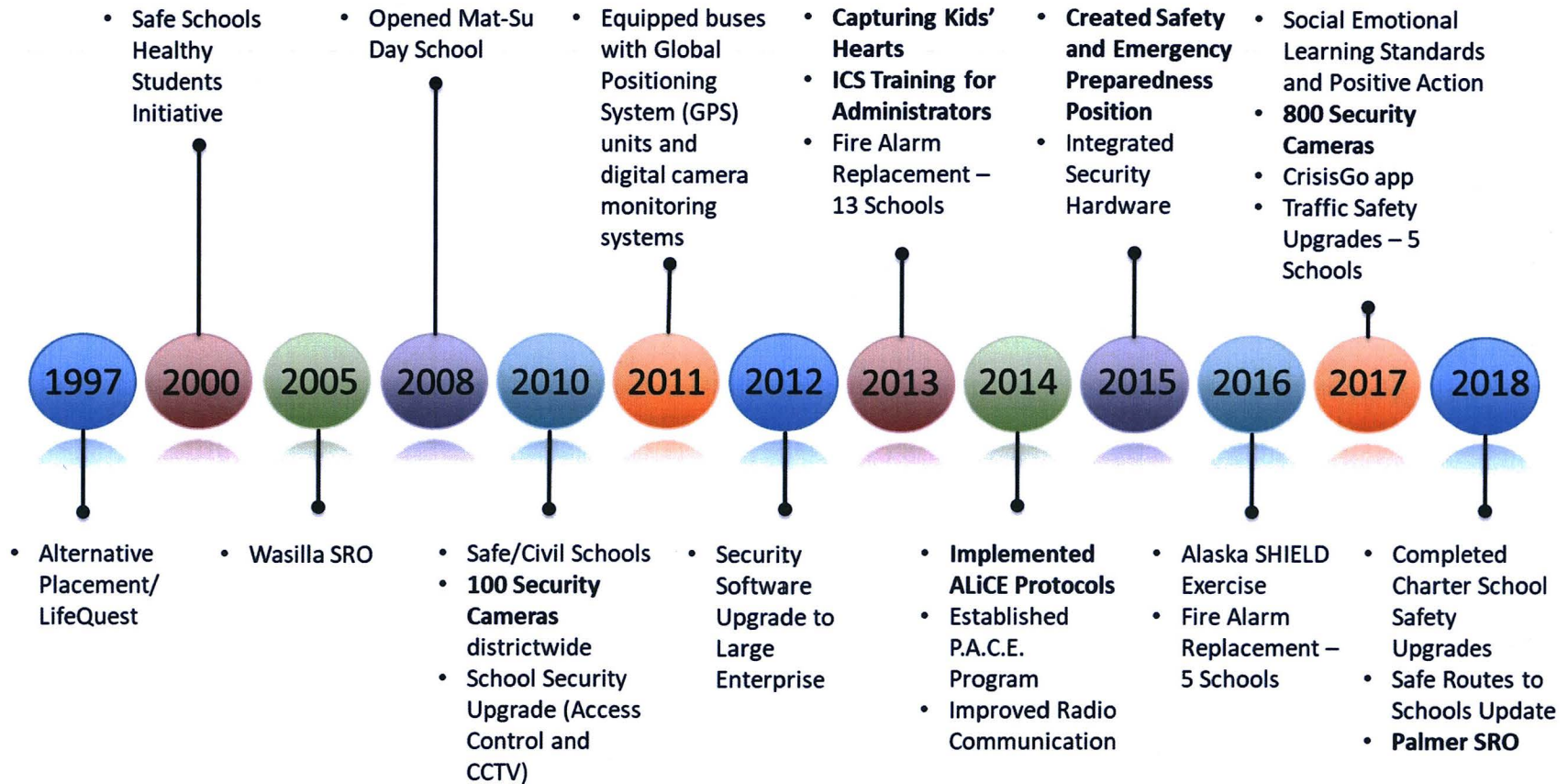


Figure 1: Safety and Security Past Efforts

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## 3.0 Past Efforts

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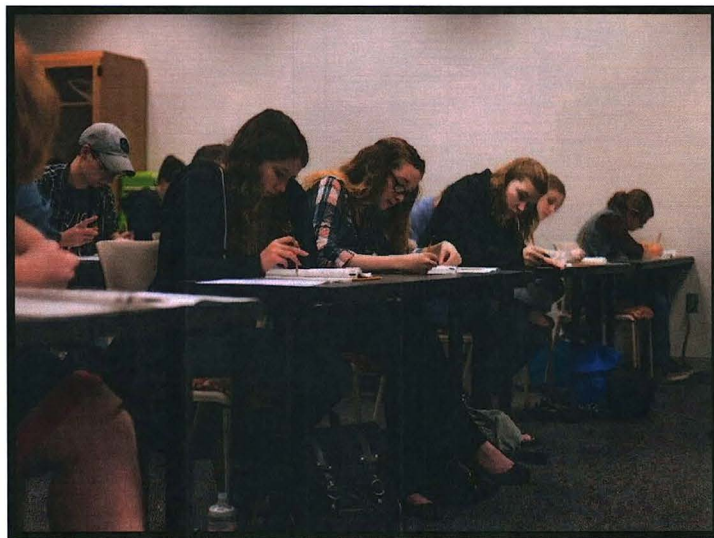
Figure 1 above illustrates a number of initiatives that MSBSD has undertaken over the past decade or so to improve safety in all schools. The figure highlights significant improvements at the District level and yet does not represent every advancement made in schools across the District.

In 2000, MSBSD formed a community coalition of youth agencies that applied for and was awarded a grant jointly funded from the Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services. For three years, community agencies partnered with MSBSD to operate a Juvenile Assessment Center, school within a school programs, and multi-hazard emergency planning for schools using a toolkit from FEMA. These efforts increased awareness and capacity for localized, ongoing, multi-faceted school safety planning as part of regular school operations.

MSBSD safety infrastructure, emergency drills, and school safety protocols have all seen significant improvements over the past ten years. Under a 2010 voter approved safety/security bond, MSBSD installed electronic access control and intrusion detection systems districtwide. Additionally, under this bond project, MSBSD increased the number of security cameras on school campuses. Today, over 800 security cameras help keep Mat-Su schools safe by deterring crime and violence on school grounds.

In 2011, MSBSD required First Student to equip all school buses with Global Positioning System (GPS) units and digital camera monitoring systems. Similar to the enhancements made in school facilities, this equipment allows administrators the ability to quickly respond to student discipline issues and ensure a more positive riding experience for all students.

In 2013 and 2014, MSBSD focused its efforts on providing active shooter and incident management training to school principals. All principals were trained in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) incident command structure, preparing school leaders to serve as incident commanders and improve cooperation with outside agencies.



In 2014, MSBSD adopted the ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) protocols for active shooter response training. ALICE training provides a framework for individuals and organizations on proactively addressing an aggressive intruder or active shooter event. ALICE provides options beyond the once traditional lockdown only approach. Improvements to the existing ALICE training model for the 2018-2019 school year will be discussed in section 4.0.

MSBSD’s emergency communications systems were further enhanced in 2014. To create redundancies and improve communications with outside agencies, MSBSD deployed emergency radios to all school sites. Schools were equipped with emergency radios programmed for the Alaska Land Radio Management (ALMR) System. The ALMR System is a collaborative partnership between public safety first responders serving citizens of Alaska. In addition to the ALMR radios, schools were issued site-based radios for administrators and key staff to support on-campus communications in the event traditional forms of communications are not available.

Finally, a new position was created in 2015 to help maintain a districtwide focus on all school safety and emergency preparedness efforts. The School Safety and Emergency Preparedness Manager works closely with schools, assisting with emergency drills and conducting facility inspections. This position also serves as MSBSD’s liaison with local law enforcement and emergency responders and coordinates training and activities with high school safety and security coordinators to improve the District’s capacity to support all schools.

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## 4.0 Ongoing Efforts

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### Prioritizing Social and Emotional Learning in MSBSD

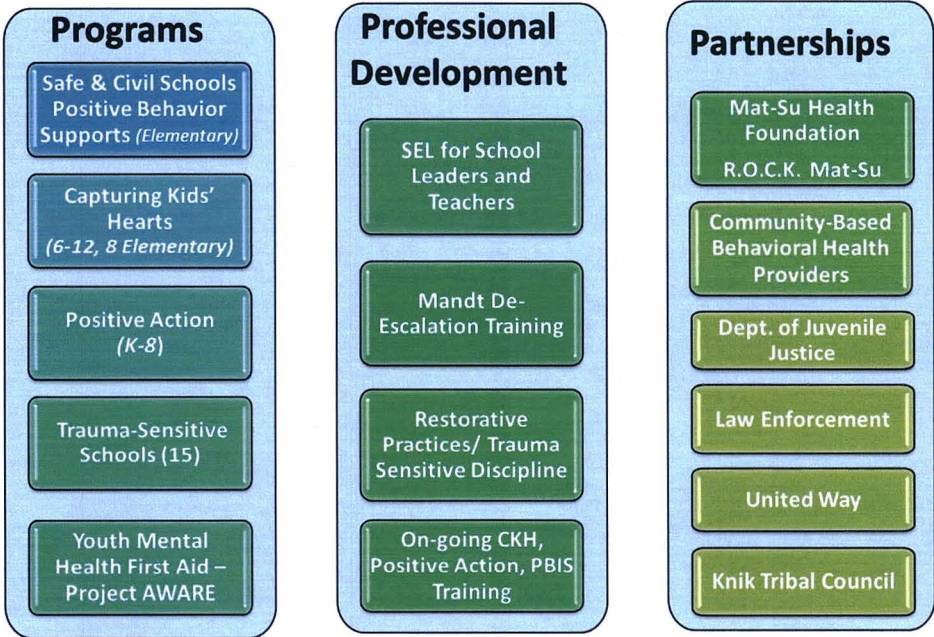


Figure 2: Social and Emotional Learning Framework

#### 4.1 Prevention

Prevention efforts are structured in a multi-tiered system of support. Prevention starts with prioritizing the social and emotional health of all students and staff. If a student is not connected and successful,

the school provides interventions to increase the frequency of adult interactions for both supervision and support. Often schools work with community partners to make appropriate referrals. All schools respond to troubled students in a structured manner, starting with assessment, and followed by placement in the most appropriate setting. This could be a behavior support program in the school or a more restrictive setting off-site.

### Social & Emotional Learning Core Competencies



Figure 3: Social Emotional Learning Core Competencies

Each dollar spent on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) can return the equivalent of \$11 in long-term benefits for students, families, and society according to a 2015 study from the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education, Columbia University. SEL is a process of acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to five core competencies as depicted in Figure 3 above. SEL is taught explicitly through programs such as Positive Action, curriculum and standards, and general practices such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). SEL has been proven to decrease problem behaviors, improve student attitudes about self, others, and school, and increase student achievement. SEL develops job keeping skills, reduces discipline issues, and risk behavior (including drugs and violence), and increases academic achievement. See Figure 4 below for results from a study involving SEL.

## 4.2 Multi-Tiered System of Support

A multi-tiered system of support includes school programs at all 47 MSBSD schools and two more restrictive environments. In MSBSD, we keep students safe through this comprehensive approach, monitoring data to determine effectiveness, and continually evaluating for improvement.

### 4.2.1 Tier 1 Support

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a school-wide system of support that includes proactive strategies for creating positive school environments and defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors. PBIS is not a program, but rather a problem-solving approach that aims to prevent inappropriate behaviors by establishing clear

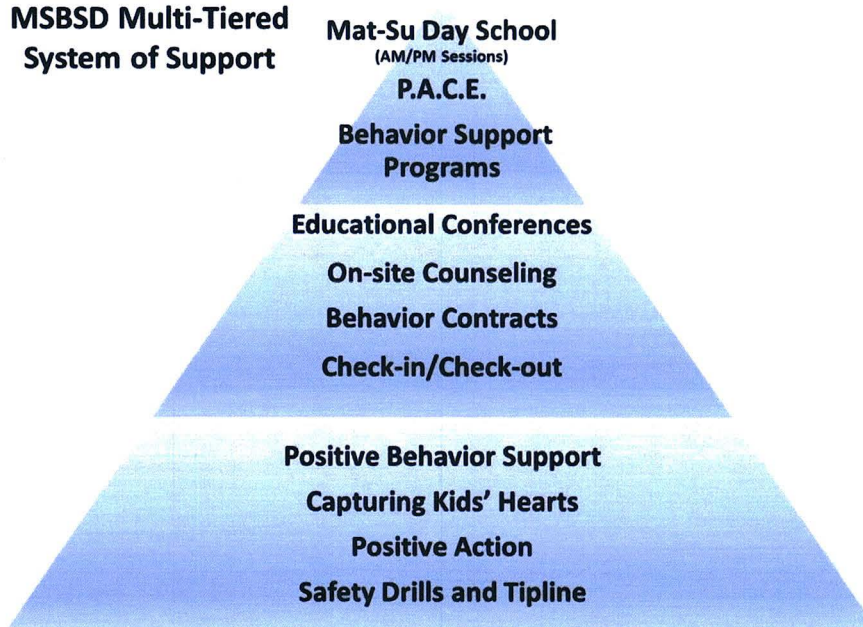
expectations, explicitly teaching appropriate behaviors, and reinforcing appropriate behaviors by providing frequent feedback to students on how well they are meeting the behavioral expectations. PBIS is an evidence-based approach that has been proven to decrease inappropriate behaviors and increase student achievement.

Safe and Civil Schools provides professional development, materials, and practical tools to help schools implement Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The mission is to help adults create environments that are emotionally and physically safe. The framework fosters independence, integrity, confidence, self-control, kindness, and responsibility for all students. The elements of Safe and Civil Schools include:

- Foundations for school-wide positive routines and expectations
- CHAMPS and ACHIEVE for classroom management
- Start on Time for tardy prevention
- On the Playground for recess safety
- In the Driver's Seat for bus safety
- Smart Kids for intervention teams.

MSBSD has worked successfully with Safe and Civil Schools since 2010 to reduce discipline referrals and improve student safety.

### MSBSD Multi-Tiered System of Support



Positive Action (PA) employs evidence-based classroom and whole school curriculum for kindergarten through eighth grades. PA integrates school, family, and community curricula that promote the positive development of the whole child (physical, intellectual, social, and emotional). PA has supplemental curriculum kits for preventing bullying, substance abuse, and violence. Students participate in three PA lessons a week.

### Capturing Kids' Hearts

Capturing Kids' Hearts (CKH) is an adult training and mindset that supports four areas:

- Building relationships with all students and colleagues
- Creating a safe environment for learning
- Developing self-managing classrooms
- Increasing empathy for diverse cultures and backgrounds

MSBSD uses CKH practices with students, teachers, support staff, administrators, bus drivers, coaches, and substitute teachers to create safe and supportive environments that cultivate student success. MSBSD has experienced a decline in student discipline and increase in graduation rates since CKH implementation. Capturing Kids' Hearts started as a pilot project in 2013 with five schools. Currently all secondary schools and eight elementary schools implement this relationship-building model.

Trauma Sensitive Schools. In partnership with R.O.C.K. Mat-Su, 15 elementary, middle, and high schools have received trauma sensitive professional development, with plans to train 10 additional schools during the 2018-2019 school year. Trauma sensitive practices include supporting all students by encouraging positive behaviors instead of condemning negative behaviors. Further, trauma sensitive practices cultivate safe and supportive learning environments where students feel safe to take academic risks, support their peers, and report at risk students/behaviors to a trusted adult.

Tipline. The MSBSD tipline provides students, staff, and the community an outlet to report any safety concern from bullying to drugs and violence. Reports can be made anonymously. The tipline is available via the MSBSD app.

### **4.2.2 Tier 2 Support**

Check-in/Check-out. This process provides daily contact morning and afternoon with a trusted adult. The focus of the conversation is on student behavior, goals, and emotional support.

Educational Conferences. Free off-site assessments by a school psychologist with referrals made to the appropriate community resources. Students posing a risk to self or others are required to participate in an assessment prior to returning to school.

Project AWARE is a grant for the purpose of improving mental health and making schools safer. The grant started in fiscal year (FY) 15 and ends in FY 19. Three AWARE counselors focus on crisis, educational, violence/conflict resolution, relationship building, and problem-solving interventions. Additionally, counselors partner with community-based providers for grief counseling, acute care, substance-use counseling, and mental/behavioral health therapy. Project AWARE counselors serve as Youth Mental Health First Aid trainers. Youth Mental Health First Aid is a course designed to teach lay people methods of assisting a young person who may be in the early stages of developing a mental

health problem or in a mental health crisis. Since the beginning of the grant, over 727 Mat-Su Borough community members have been trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

### 4.2.3 Tier 3 Support

Positive Alternative for Continuing Education (PACE) provides an alternative to suspensions with meals and transportation. Students engage in online learning for credit recovery and participate with the Department of Juvenile Justice in Tier 3 groups aimed at drug and alcohol abuse intervention and aggression replacement.

Mat-Su Day School offers behavioral, social, and emotional learning in a restrictive, therapeutic environment with an emphasis on academics. Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) can attend the Day School while suspended. Evening classes are available for students currently expelled from school. Other students with IEPs are placed in this environment based on their need for support.

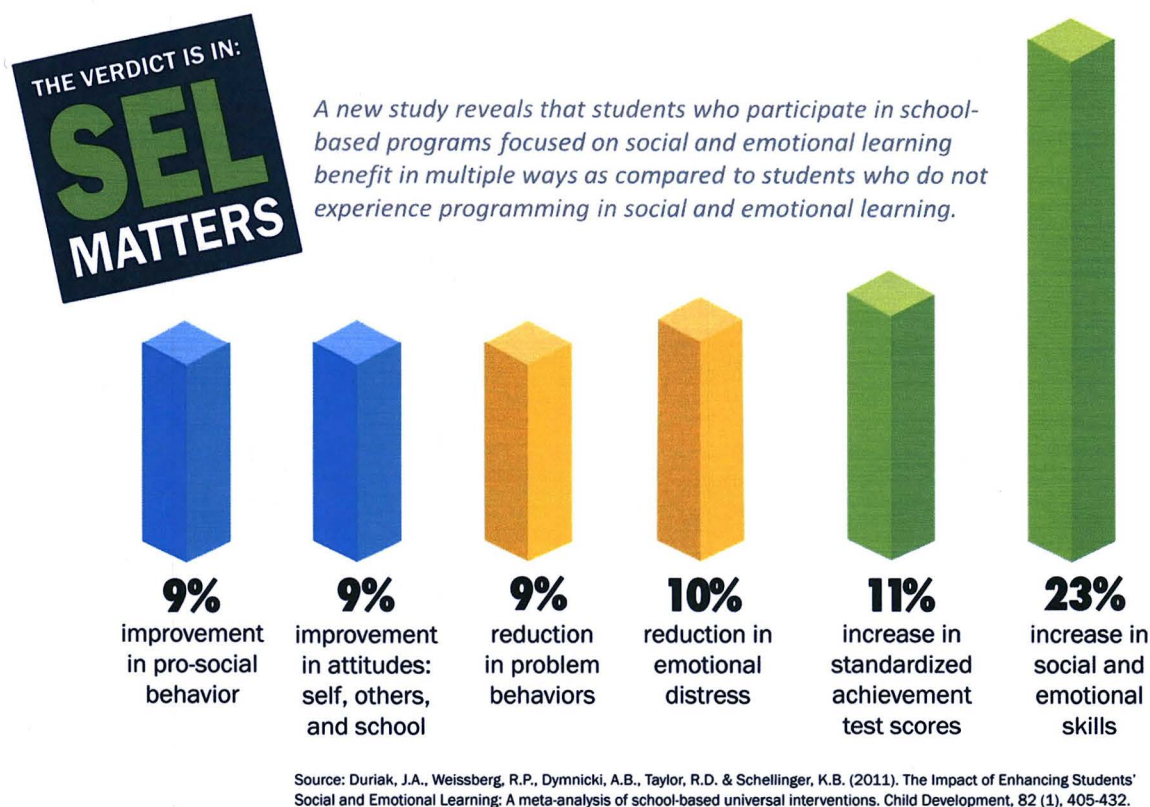


Figure 4: SEL Outcomes

MSBSD recently completed a school climate and culture survey conducted as part of the District's accreditation process. Of those surveyed, 98% of elementary students felt safe at school along with 96% of secondary students. Of the 3,265 parents surveyed, 91% of parents believe their student feels safe at school and agreed that they were welcomed and treated with respect.

### 4.3 Preparedness

As previously discussed in section 3.0, Past Efforts, many processes, procedures, and systems are in place at MSBSD schools to ensure that students and staff are ready in the event of an incident involving school violence.

Figure 5 below illustrates MSBSD’s emergency management framework, which includes preparedness, response and infrastructure.

Preparedness includes periodic, recurring site assessments by trained safety and security personnel. During the fall semester of each school year, safety and security personnel complete an annual site assessment of each MSBSD facility, typically alongside the building administrator (principal).

This assessment includes a review of all safety and security measures at schools including drills, communications equipment and various safety and security infrastructure at each site. Shortfalls are annotated and a follow-up is scheduled to address items noted during the inspection. All MSBSD schools complete monthly fire drills and ALICE, bomb, and earthquakes drills each semester. MSBSD employs safety and security coordinators at each large comprehensive high and a School Resource Officer (SRO) at Wasilla High School.

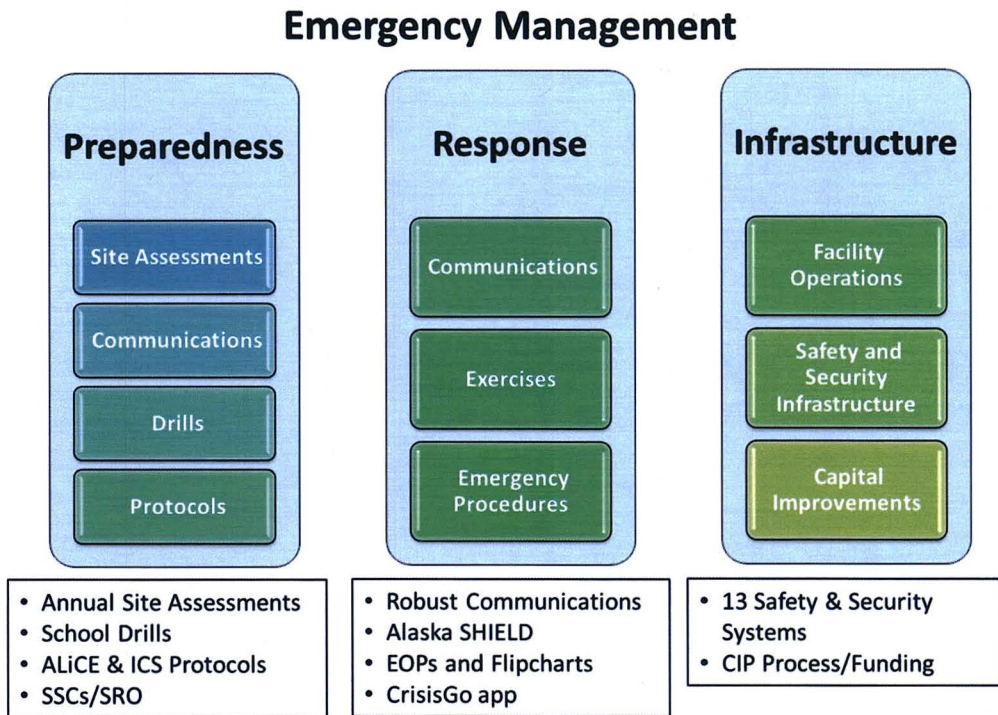


Figure 5: Emergency Management Framework

MSBSD incorporates emergency radio communications at each school site as previously described in section 3.0. All schools evaluate and update campus-specific Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) annually. These EOPs include evacuation, shelter-in-place, and parent reunification plans. All schools have a crisis response team for emergencies that are critical to executing emergency drills. This past

year, MSBSD launched a new emergency planning and communications platform that puts emergency response plans and contacts on mobile devices and desktops for immediate use. This app provides administrators and staff quick access to emergency response procedures along with the ability to quickly report emergencies, call for help, and stay connected during a crisis.

School safety infrastructure has significantly improved over the past decade. MSBSD implemented and maintains 13 major safety and security infrastructure standards across the district.

1. Keyless access control
2. Intrusion detection system
3. Magnetic holds
4. Duress and lockdown call
5. Security cameras
6. Addressable fire alarm and sprinkler system
7. Intercom
8. Automated external defibrillator (AED)
9. Radio communications
10. Interior roll-down gates
11. Exterior lighting
12. Security fencing
13. Pedestrian and vehicle gates

MSBSD also has an ongoing capital improvement process in place to address new safety and security needs. To help meet capital infrastructure needs, the School Board has authorized \$300,000 in safety and security upgrades over the past two years.

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## 5.0 Future Efforts

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As MSBSD Superintendent, Dr. Monica Goyette, recently stated, “While our mission is the education of all students, school safety is the number one priority for the District.” As this review has demonstrated, there are many efforts already in place to foster safe and healthy school environments for students. MSBSD remains committed to sustaining those efforts and best practices while continuing to make incremental improvements.

### 5.1 Prevention

Prevention consists of our efforts in curriculum, relationship building, and disciplinary procedures. This includes our recent initiatives with social emotional learning, specifically Capturing Kids’ Hearts at the secondary level and Positive Action at the elementary level. These efforts in prevention will continue in the upcoming school year. Specifically, MSBSD will engage in awareness training to better recognize students at risk to self or others. PBIS foundation teams will be available at all schools with a focus on climate and connectedness.

A cornerstone of school safety is connecting students and families to behavioral health services. MSBSD is partnering with the Mat-Su Health Foundation and behavioral health providers to increase access to behavioral health services for students in schools. Targeted Wellness Grants provide schools with a

toolkit to help at-risk students by paying for initial counseling services from outside providers. Schools help facilitate communication between providers and families by providing a safe space in school for students and their families to meet with behavioral health providers. Five schools piloting this process have demonstrated a decrease in adverse behaviors among at-risk students.

These efforts will continue to bolster safe and healthy schools for all students and staff. In order to evaluate the success of social emotional learning, MSBSD will be looking at key performance indicators around attendance, student achievement, use of restraints, number of discipline incidents, and graduation rates to evaluate success.

## 5.2 Preparedness

### 5.2.1 School Violence Preparedness

MSBSD will be making improvements to our school violence training model this coming school year. As part of ALICE training, staff will be utilizing a new blended learning approach with online learning in conjunction with school drills. This blended model will support training for new employees as well as annual recertification for all other staff as outlined in Figure 6 below. Additionally, MSBSD anticipates notifying parents prior to ALICE drills taking place in their child’s school. This notice will include information about ALICE protocols. This communication will help inform parents around what their children are taught and allow them to observe drills, if desired.

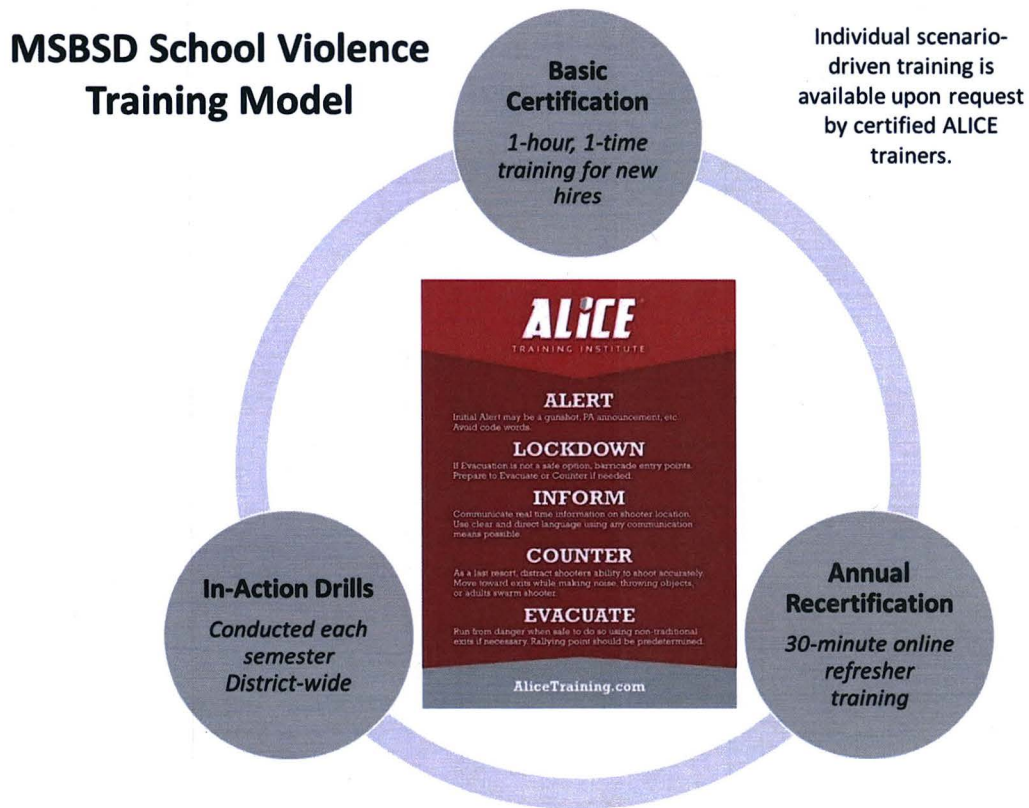


Figure 6: MSBSD School Violence Training Model

MSBSD intends to host an annual forum this fall with local and State responders and agencies involved in school safety. During this forum, participants will engage in a table top exercise (TTX) using a school violence scenario to coordinate with local and State law enforcement and first responders regarding key responsibilities in the event of a school violence incident.

### 5.2.2 Security Measures Under Consideration

MSBSD is currently considering a number of new school security measures. MSBSD staff are coordinating with the City of Palmer for a School Resource Officer (SRO) for Palmer High School as well as surrounding schools within the City of Palmer for the 2018-2019 school year. Additional expansion to the SRO program is being discussed to encompass other schools currently not covered by an SRO.

MSBSD is evaluating a plan for changes to classroom door hardware (locks) as well as changes needed for keeping main entrances locked during normal school hours. Another measure being given consideration is providing front office staff and administrators capsicum (pepper) spray at each school for addressing a violent or aggressive intruder.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Efforts to prevent school crime and violence are varied and, in some cases, multi-tiered to help school officials respond appropriately to any threat. Keeping our schools safe requires ongoing efforts in the way of prevention and preparedness, as outlined within this review. MSBSD is seeking input from community stakeholders regarding school safety and will be looking to continue the conversation moving forward.

MSBSD staff will be providing this review to the School Board at the regularly scheduled meeting on April 4, 2018. Following this update, MSBSD will host a Facebook Live event on April 5, 2018 for the community to discuss school safety. The Facebook Live event will be followed by a school community survey. The school community survey feedback will help to inform the development of short and long term plans to increase our efforts in prevention and preparedness.

For information related to this review, please contact the District office at (907) 746-9200.

