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School Safety

Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)

School safety issues fall into a variety of categories:

- Supervision of students
- Drills

- Physical plant
- School violence
- Warning systems

To read more, click on the link below.

<http://adventisteducation.org/principals-handbook/>

Using Our Crisis to Inform Our Planning and Yours!

*Jim Weller, Principal
Loma Linda Academy, Junior High*

“All plans fail when they meet the enemy” or so the military maxim goes. On Dec. 2, 2015, our plans did not fail, but we discovered changes needed to be made. On that date two radicalized Islamic terrorists gunned down 35 people only two miles from our school. Fourteen people died, and our community was suddenly in crisis. To complicate matters, all Loma Linda Academy principals were at a meeting 20 miles away. You can imagine our deliberations as we considered the safety of 1300 students and employees and planned for managing the traffic we would generate as parental anxiety mounted.

Our safety drills were put to the test, and we learned a few things. Let me enumerate the learnings and suggest what they might mean for you:

1. We have great assistant principals! They thought on their feet, ran the schools' established drills, and made changes as the situation changed. Few Adventist schools have full-time assistant principals, so the generalizable lesson is: Be sure that you have your second- and third-in-command people ready. Name them and train them. Include them in all your drills.
2. In a real crisis no one has a crystal ball. No one can tell you how long the event will last or the ways in which it will unfold. Information from the press will be partial and sometimes inaccurate. So be ready for things to change rapidly; be prepared to shift your response accordingly.

When we first heard the news of the shootings, we placed the school in a “modified lockdown,” a term debated at

some length afterwards, but it served our purpose. Adult workers watched our perimeter so they could alert us if the situation in our immediate surroundings changed. We told students to stay indoors and out of sight, but teachers continued their classes. This kept the students focused on something other than fear. As the seriousness of the event became clear, and parent anxiety mounted, we decided to close school. We staggered our dismissal times to alleviate traffic congestion.

3. A real crisis is a golden learning experience because it is out of your control. The school community works together with focus and intensity against a shared threat. What is “ho hum” during a drill, becomes vivid and laced with adrenaline. Watch for what that reveals about your emergency plans and your facility.

By 3:20 Elementary had cleared many of their children, and High School had dismissed. The remaining students waited in the gym for their rides. Junior High was just beginning to release students into parental custody. Clumps of people were traveling the long walk from our classrooms to the parking lot.

Suddenly, emergency responders were speeding down our hill with sirens blaring. Choppers hovered overhead. We called a full lockdown and began commanding parents and students to take shelter. We learned that the final fatal shooting of the terrorists had happened several blocks from our school. We saw parents in confusion. Was this a full lockdown, or not? Our antiquated Junior High bell system had rung a false alarm earlier. Now people argued whether this alarm was legitimate. During our post-crisis review, we agreed that Junior High needed a bell and paging system that could provide clear and reliable communication. We also agreed that the whole

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School Safety, A Principal's Responsibility

*Brian Harris, Principal
Walla Walla Valley Academy*

A confession: I am not an expert on school safety. Almost all of us who have been called to school leadership could say this about a wide range of school issues. It is our responsibility to address all phases of the school program to ensure our schools succeed in our mission - our students. Because school safety is so important, we have a fundamental responsibility to get it right—a tall order!

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the words “school safety”? Maybe it is drills, emergency response plans, or screenings. But we all know that school safety is about much more. Leadership of school safety seems to get more complicated and all-consuming with each passing day.

The news headlines about school tragedies, ranging from natural disasters to active shootings, are enough to make you want to pull the covers over your head in the morning! That is not what great school leaders do. But where do you start with such a weighty responsibility? Emergency preparedness, supervision plans, volunteer and employee screening, transportation, bullying and that is just a start.

I would like to suggest a handful of questions that we should be asking ourselves to make sure that we are keeping our students safe.

What are you doing to create a safe environment—are you cultivating safety awareness and promoting preparedness?

Do you have an effective system of communication and conduct regular drills for different types of emergencies?

Do you have a safety team that helps assess readiness and suggest improvements in school safety?

Have you led the entire staff in training to deal with crisis situations?

How accessible is your school to anyone who may walk in at any time?

Do your students know to whom they should report suspicious incidents, bullying, harassment, etc.?

This is not an exhaustive list. Keeping our students safe seems to require that we keep asking ourselves these type of questions. It requires that we problem solve and make changes that will yield safety improvements. We must be careful not to succumb to “paralysis of analysis.” Doing nothing is not an option.

The heart of our mission as Seventh-day Adventist Christian schools is the restoration of the image of God in our students. We might call this spiritual safety. Are we creating a safe spiritual school climate where students encounter Jesus? School safety could come down to a comprehensive “to do list.”

If a safe campus is a prerequisite to nurturing Christian faith, Adventist values, and a growing relationship with Jesus, then our priority for school safety takes on new meaning and new urgency.

Plan well, practice often, pray without ceasing! ☩

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Protect Your School Year-Round

*Anna Bartlett, Writer &
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Adventist Risk Management, Inc.*

Adventist Risk Management, Inc. shares a variety of easy-to-use resources for keeping your school safe.

Safety information sheets, booklets, worksheets, and videos come in four different languages: English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. These resources are designed to help protect your school and activities every step of the way from the planning phase through post-event evaluation.

Our resources answer your questions and provide practical solutions to current concerns, such as: active shooter situations, cybersecurity hacks, drone management, transportation and trip safety, and more. Learn more and find resources customized for protecting your school at: <https://adventistrisk.org/prevention-resources/safety-topics/school>. ☩

Subscribe to ARM's free weekly E-newsletter [SOLUTIONS BLOG](#) for topics pertinent to school administration and operations.

Using Our Crisis (continued)

40-acre campus needed a civil-defense-type horn that would be used only for full lockdowns.

4. Since none of us wants to instigate a crisis just to test our emergency plans, we can use the next best thing. Table top drills, where the school's emergency response team sits down with county emergency management officials,

provide a good test of your ability to respond in crisis. The county officers will unfold a changing situation based on their own knowledge, and they likely will find critical holes in your plan. This is good. And surprisingly, just as you think your plan stinks, they will reassure you that you are miles ahead of the other schools who have not asked for such a drill. ☩

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