

Creating safe and drug-free schools



THE Challenge

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS

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Promote safety with the “big three” —

- caring relationships
- high expectations
- opportunities to participate and contribute.

WestEd Researchers

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Safe Schools: Academic Success Depends on It

Mounting pressure on schools to improve academic performance has led many educators to focus on testing and accountability. Often emphasis is placed on ways to strengthen the curriculum, promote sound instructional practices, and tutor students who need help.

While these are critical areas for improvement, significant evidence indicates a number of nonacademic factors influence academic achievement.

“Schools seeking to improve the academic performance of their students cannot ignore the role that health, school safety, caring relationships in the school, low rates of alcohol and drug use, nutrition, and exercise play in their overall efforts,” said Wade S. Brynelson of the California Department of Education.

Data from the 1998–2001 California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) indicate a strong link between academic achievement and students’ overall health and resilience. Schools perform better when students have fewer health risks, such as drug use or poor nutrition, and more protective factors like caring relationships within school.

Researchers from WestEd, the nonprofit research firm that conducts CHKS for the California Department of Education, used the data to

analyze the *Academic Performance Index* (API) scores of almost 1,700 secondary schools. They found that high performing schools had the following in common:

Breakfast—More students had eaten breakfast on the day of surveying.

Alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use—Fewer students reported using these substances on school property during the past 30 days.

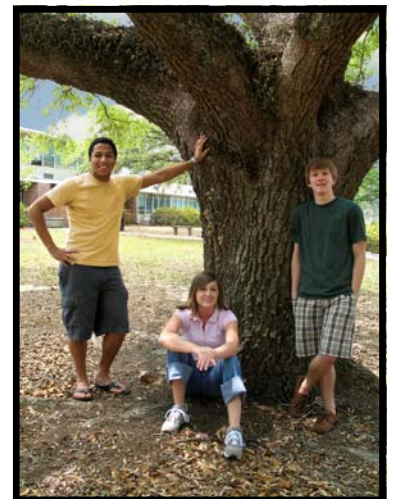
School safety—Students’ perception of safety at school showed a strong positive relationship to API scores.

Resilience—Perceived protective factors (caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for participation) showed a positive relation to API scores.

In addition, surveys show that students who feel unsafe or threatened at school not only fail to perform to their potential, but in many cases do not go to school at all because they are afraid.

In 2003, 5 percent of students reported that they avoided school activities or one or more places in school because they were fearful, according to the School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey.

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Educating the Whole Child

Achieving the right kind of balance that encourages all children to learn, work, and contribute to their fullest potential has been a continuing challenge in our complex society.

Research continues to look at a wide array of factors that enhance learning, including many developmental and environmental elements.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified social and emotional skills that enhance the academic learning environment

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Characteristics of a Safe School

- High academic standards
- Clear rules and policies that are fairly enforced
- High levels of parent involvement
- Effective community-school partnerships
- Extended-day and after-school programs
- Good citizenship and character
- Well-prepared and practiced plans for crisis or emergency

Safe Schools (continued)

The survey also reported that 2 percent of students avoided extracurricular activities, skipped class, or stayed home from school entirely.

An environment rich in connectedness and safety will make it easier for students to attain academic success.

When nonacademic attitudes and behaviors are addressed in a school improvement or

climate change program, it provides a more comprehensive approach to academic achievement.

Del Elliott, director of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, said “Many school-based drug and violence prevention programs have also demonstrated an improvement in the social climate of the school, indicat-

ing that these programs can directly or indirectly facilitate an improvement in academic performance.”

He continued, “In some cases, there is little reason to believe that changes in curriculum or instructional practices will have any significant effect on academic performance until kids feel safe and respected at school.” ■

These programs recognized as effective programs by the U.S. Department of Education and the Substance Abuse and the Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) have shown significant improvements in creating a positive school environment which contributes to academic achievement:

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)

A comprehensive program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behavior problems in elementary school-aged children while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom.

This innovative curriculum is designed for use by educators and counselors in a multiyear, universal prevention model. Although primarily focused on the school and classroom settings, information and activities are also included for use with parents or guardians.

Find more information about the PATHS program online at www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/paths.

Seattle Social Development Project

A universal, multidimensional intervention that decreases juveniles’ problem behaviors by working with parents, teachers, and children.

It incorporates both social control and social learning theories and intervenes early in children’s development to increase pro-social bonds, strengthen attachment and commitment to schools, and decrease delinquency.

Learn more about the Seattle Social Development Project at <http://depts.washington.edu/ssdp>.

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

A multilevel, multicomponent program designed to reduce and prevent schools’ bully problems. School staff are largely responsible for introducing and implementing the program, and their efforts are directed toward improving peer relations and making the school a safe and pleasant place to be.

The Bullying Prevention Program attempts to restructure the existing school environment to reduce opportunities and rewards for bullying behavior.

More information about the Bullying Prevention Program can be found at www.clemson.edu/olweus.

Healthy People 2010: The Nation's Youths Are High Priority

Health—

a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Preamble to the Constitution,
World Health Organization

The Healthy People 2010 initiative, the second decade-long promotion aimed at improving our nation's health, is nearly at its midpoint. Priorities for youths make up almost a quarter of the objectives. The two overarching goals of Healthy People 2010 are:

- Increase quality of and years of healthy life.
- Eliminate health disparities.

The initiative, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, relies on input of most federal agencies and hundreds of national and state organizations to identify ways to meet priority objectives. The two overarching goals are supported by 467 objectives in 28 focus areas including injury and violence prevention, cancer, diabetes, and substance abuse prevention.

The *National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health by the Year 2010* was developed in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a companion initiative focused on priorities for the nation's youths. Among those priorities are: preventing

violence and substance abuse and improving mental health account for 9 of the 21 critical health objectives. The objectives seek to reduce risky behaviors or increase positive factors by specific percentages from their 1999 levels.

Every citizen, community, and state should be encouraged to take steps to increase health. Some of the things schools can do include:

- Revise school nutrition policies and offerings.
- Assess and make adjustments to health and physical education classes.
- Sponsor a health fair.
- Establish community partnerships with health agencies.
- Promote substance abuse prevention.

For guidance, the National Adolescent Health Information Center offers *Improving the Health of Adolescents & Young Adults; A Guide for States and Communities*. The book can be downloaded or ordered for free online at www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/adolescenthealth/guide/order.htm. ■

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Objectives

- Reduce the proportion of 12- to 17-year-olds who engage in binge drinking.
- Reduce past-month-use of illicit substances in 12- to 17-year-olds.
- Reduce the suicide rate among 10- to 19-year-olds.
- Reduce the rate of suicide attempts that require medical attention in 9th- to 12th-graders.
- Reduce the proportion of children with disabilities who are reported to be sad, unhappy, or depressed.
- Increase the proportion of children with mental health problems who receive treatment.

Violence Prevention Objectives

- Reduce homicides in 10- to 19-year-olds.
- Reduce physical fighting among 9th- to 12th-grade students.
- Reduce weapon carrying by 9th- to 12th-graders on school grounds.



Educating the Whole Child (continued)

and bring balance to the lives of children. CASEL says a combination of knowledge, social-emotional skills, and a strong moral compass will contribute to children reaching their potential.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) represents a part of education that links academic knowledge with the many non-academic skills necessary to succeed in school and life.

The basis of SEL lies in five core abilities:

- recognize and manage emotions.
- develop caring and concern for others.
- make responsible decisions.
- establish positive relationships.
- handle challenging situations effectively.

Many educators find success working with families, community and faith-based organizations, and health agencies to address these skills.

CASEL published a new guide to help schools lead the collaboration necessary for SEL. *Sustainable Schoolwide Social and*

Emotional Learning (SEL): Implementation Guide and Toolkit contains case studies and 40 tools taking schools step-by-step through the SEL process.

The guide discusses steps to:

- assess current resources and school needs;

- choose an evidence-based SEL program;
- integrate SEL into academic subjects; and
- evaluate outcomes.

Visit www.casel.org for more information about SEL and to find resource materials. ■

Skills for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning

Know Yourself and Others

- Identify feelings
- Be responsible
- Recognize strengths
- Develop confidence

Make Responsible Decisions

- Manage emotions
- Understand situations
- Set goals and plans
- Solve problems creatively

Care for Others

- Show empathy
- Respect others
- Consider other perspectives
- Appreciate and engage diversity

Know How to Act

- Communicate effectively
- Build relationships
- Negotiate fairly
- Refuse provocations
- Seek help if needed
- Act ethically



Founded in 1994, CASEL is a research and resource center located at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Its work promotes evidence-based social, emotional, and academic learning as an integral part of K–12 education.

Its mission is to enhance children's success in school and life.

Food for Thought: Healthy Habits Begin at Home and School

The old saying is right: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Eating a nutritious breakfast promotes energy, alertness, and concentration. Studies show that students who regularly eat breakfast have fewer behavioral problems, tardy slips, and visits to the school nurse. And these students are more likely to have higher math and reading scores and higher standardized test scores.



Healthy eating, coupled with physical activity, promotes strong growth and development, protection from obesity and disease, and happier attitudes toward life. Children are establishing lifelong physical activity and nutrition habits, so the opportunities at home and school make a difference.

Grants from the Carol M. White Physical Education Program administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) help schools and communities encourage healthy habits. Since 2001, the program has funded almost \$230 million in grants.

Waterloo Intermediate/Middle School in Waterloo, Wisconsin, used its 2004–05 PEP grant to make physical education a fitness-based program rather than sports-based. School principal Ann Kox said that 77 percent of students improved their Body Mass Index (BMI), 75 percent reduced their body fat, and 86 percent said they enjoyed physical activity outside of school.

Hundreds of others have used the PEP grants for activities such as adding nutri-

tion to the curriculum; offering more activities like bicycling, climbing, or yoga; and buying equipment such as pedometers and in-line skates.

Health and Wellness Policies

Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program are required to have a local wellness policy in place as of July 1 for the 2006–07 school year. The requirement, from the *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004*, is intended to promote nutrition education and physical activity in schools.

Key considerations of a wellness policy include:

Establish a local wellness committee:

- Invite parents, teachers, administrators, food service staff, and students to create policies and monitor progress.

Provide nutrition education:

- Teach concepts of healthy eating such as balanced diet and proper hydration.
- Include discussions about the importance of physical activity to health.
- Use a qualified nutrition professional to develop outreach messages.
- Engage parents and family members in activities and education.

Improve the quality of foods and beverages available at school:

- Provide nutritious choices (fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) in the lunch room, vending machines, and school stores.
- Provide water, milk, fruit juice, and limit carbonated beverages.
- Encourage healthy choices for classroom snacks and celebrations.

Provide a better food environment:

- Make meal presentation appealing (clean facilities, enough seating, short waiting lines).
- Encourage kids to eat breakfast—either before arriving or on campus.

- If possible have recess before lunch.
- Give students enough time to finish eating—upon seating, at least 10 minutes for breakfast and 20 minutes for lunch.

Improve food service operations:

- Plan meals for the week that meet nutrition standards.
- Promote the school meal program.
- Provide training and professional development for food service staff.

Provide opportunities for physical activity:

- Provide physical education classes taught by certified PE teachers.
- Encourage students to get at least 60 minutes of age-appropriate physical activity every day.
- Don't use physical activity as a form of punishment or discipline.

Improve monitoring and evaluation:

- Assess nutrition and physical activity needs to create and evaluate policies.
- Monitor policy implementation and make adjustments as needed. ■

USDA School Breakfast Tool Kit

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service offers helpful information about good nutrition, including a tool kit for breakfast programs. The kit includes surveys, analysis tools, marketing ideas, and evaluations.

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/toolkit

**In 2004,
more than
750,000
young
people
aged 10–24
were
treated in
emergency
rooms for
injuries due
to violence.**

U.S. Centers for
Disease Control
and Prevention

Protective Factors: Accentuate the Positive

Youth violence continues to be a big threat to our nation's health. As such, we benefit from knowing what puts our youths at risk and what helps protect them from that risk. Lowering the risk is only half the picture.

Research on protective factors, while not yet as extensive as that for risk factors, is growing. Certain qualities and conditions can help buffer young people from the risk of becoming violent, antisocial, or delinquent. These factors are typically categorized as individual, family, school, and peer factors.

According to a Surgeon General's report on youth violence released in 2001, there are two factors with substantial evidence as being protective: having an intolerant attitude toward deviance and having a personal commitment to school.

Numerous indicators could prove to be protective, and research continues to investigate:

- Positive social orientation (traditional values and social norms).
- Secure relationship with a caring adult.
- High grade point average.
- Ability to talk about problems with parents.
- Perceived high expectations from parents.
- Peer groups that value academic achievement.
- Involvement in social activities.
- Frequent activities with parents.
- Recognition and encouragement from teachers.

Intolerance of Deviance

Having an intolerant attitude toward deviance reflects a belief in traditional and social values. One step further, this attitude will carry with it a view that wrongdoing is unacceptable. Young people with these beliefs will typically avoid delinquent and criminal behavior, including violence. They will have friends who also shun delinquent behavior.

Commitment to School

Having a strong commitment to school primarily involves embracing the values and goals of schooling. Children who have a commitment to school are more likely to stay away from violence

and delinquency because school success is important to them. These children also value approval and recognition from adults.

Social Development Strategy

Developed by researchers David Hawkins and Richard Catalano, the Social Development Strategy focuses on similar principles: bonding to pro-social family members, friends, and to the school itself; plus clear standards for behavior.

This approach encourages families, communities, and schools to establish strong relationships and clear standards for behavior. It's important to model healthy behaviors for young people—and to talk about those expectations.

SDS offers four ways to reinforce these protective factors:

- Provide opportunities for youths to be involved in productive roles—at home, at school, in the neighborhood.
- Teach skills to be successful in these roles.
- Give consistent recognition and positive reinforcement for positive involvement.
- Give constructive feedback when standards are not met.

Hawkins and Catalano are principal researchers with the Social Development Research Group (SDRG) in Seattle. SDRG is a multidisciplinary team of researchers who are dedicated to positive development for youths and the factors and interventions that contribute to it. ■

“To prevent a problem before it happens, the factors that predict the problem must be changed.”

David Hawkins

Looking for a way to stay informed about work in preventing youth violence and substance abuse, and improving health and education?

Many government agencies, research institutes, and community organizations provide free e-mail alerts and newsletters. Signing up is easy, as is unsubscribing if you change your mind. All of the agencies listed below have privacy policies to safeguard your e-mail address and any other information collected.

■ Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

<http://listserv.ed.gov/archives/preventioned.html>

Join a new listserv called *PreventionED—OSDFS Prevention News Bulletin*. Enroll online for timely e-mails on prevention information, research, grant information, and the latest news from OSDFS. Other ED lists are also available at the site.

■ National Center for Education Statistics

<http://nces.ed.gov/newsflash>

Receive e-mail alerts about NCES news and publications addressing topics you select. *News Flash* delivers updates on conferences, new data, and Web tools. Choose from education topics like crime and safety, academic performance, and finance.

■ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/enews/juvjust.html>

The JUVJUST listserv offers information on juvenile justice and other youth-service publications, funding, and events. Browse archived announcements while signing up.

■ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<http://sims.health.org>

Receive e-news from SAMHSA's Information Mailing System (SIMS). Information on substance abuse and mental health issues includes new publications, grant announcements, policy updates, and new data.

Questions and Comments

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? *The Challenge* is launching a new feature to include questions and comments from readers, and we need your comments.

Please send letters to editor Susan Lineberry by mail, fax, or e-mail. Or visit *The Challenge* Web site to submit comments or ideas. Please include your name and city for publication, and contact information if you want a reply.

The Web site also features a survey for readers to complete. Visit anytime to submit opinions about the content and look of the newsletter.

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Resources

Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report

2006, NCJ 212906

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

This report presents comprehensive information on juvenile crime, violence, and victimization and on the juvenile justice system. Data sources include the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System* and OJJDP's national *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement*.

Available free online at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/nr2006/downloads/nr2006.pdf> or call the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800) 851-3420.

Making It Happen: School Nutrition Success Stories

2005

Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; U.S. Department of Education

This report summarizes the varied approaches 32 schools and districts took to improve student nutrition. It addresses topics such as beverage choices, competitive foods selection, and marketing.

Available free online at <http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/resources/makingithappen.html>.

Measuring Violence-Related Attitudes, Behaviors, and Influences Among Youths: A Compendium of Assessment Tools, Second Edition

2005

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

This collection of measures is available to assess violence-related beliefs and behaviors in youths ages 5–24. The measures can help schools and other agencies establish a baseline and monitor effectiveness of a curriculum or program.

Available free online at www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/measure.htm or order a free copy from the same site.

The Road to Success Video

2005, CMHS SVP-0124

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (SS/HS)
U.S. Department of Education; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; U.S. Department of Justice

This video introduces the SS/HS Initiative during a tour of four grant sites from the more than 200 communities that have benefited from the collaborative grant program.

Available free online at www.sshs.samhsa.gov/initiative/road.aspx or call SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center at (800) 789-2647.