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RESEARCH BRIEF #2

Center For The Prevention Of School Violence

THE "EFFECTIVENESS" OF THE SAFE SCHOOLS PYRAMID STRATEGIES



The Center for the Prevention of School Violence's survey of high schools in North Carolina focused upon the strategies which comprise the Center's Safe Schools Pyramid. Taken together, these six strategies address the areas schools must attend to in order to establish and maintain safety, security, and order. These areas are represented by what the Center refers to as the three "P's" of safe schools: place, people, and purpose.

How "effective" the strategies are is of critical importance given what is at stake if schools do not provide environments which are safe, secure, and orderly. There are several approaches which must be used to determine such "effectiveness." Ultimately, a combining of methods which determine effectiveness with reference to both qualitative assessment and quantitative assessment needs to occur when analyses are conducted.

A first step in the Center's analysis of the effectiveness of these strategies involves qualitative assessment. In the Center's high school strategy survey, school personnel were asked their judgments of the "effectiveness" of the strategies on a rating scale. A rating of "one" on the scale represented a "most effective" rating; a rating of seven, a "least effective" rating. Important to note is that the strategies were not rated in comparison to one another; school personnel were not asked which was most effective in a relative sense. Instead the strategies were asked about as discrete approaches. Additionally, the school personnel who responded to the survey, ninety-five percent of whom were principals or assistant principals, provided perceptions of effectiveness from only one segment of their school communities. Other staff, teachers, students, and parents also have views of effectiveness which would, if gathered, round out a school's qualitative assessment of these strategies.

From the principals' and assistant principals' perspectives revealed by the survey, variations in effectiveness appear among the strategies. Only one strategy, the School Resource Officer (SRO), received a "one" as its modal (most often occurring) rating; sixty-two percent of the respondents rated SROs with a "one;" another twenty-six percent rated them with a "two," and the lowest rating received was a "five." Only two strategies received a "two" as their most frequently occurring rating. These strategies were Physical Design and Technology and Teen Court. All of the other strategies in the Pyramid, except for Student Court, received modal ratings of "three;" Student Court received a "four."

These determinations of "effectiveness," although only a first step in analysis, provide some initial understanding of how the strategies are viewed by individuals who have some basis from which to judge them. Despite some limitations on how much emphasis can be placed solely upon these views, they offer perceptions of "effectiveness" which can play a role in decisions about which strategies appear to hold promise and are worth pursuing.

As stated earlier, the Center's review of the effectiveness ratings generated by the high school strategy survey is only a first step in the Center's planned analysis of the effectiveness of the Safe Schools Pyramid strategies. Attention in the future will be paid to examining the strategies quantitatively with attempts to link strategies, including information about degree of implementation as well as combinations of strategies, with impact on reported incidents of school violence. The combination of qualitative and quantitative assessments of effectiveness will enable the Center to further understanding of how schools can establish and maintain safety, security, and order and create educational environments which foster academic excellence.

For more information about the Center, call:
Center for the Prevention of School Violence
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