

Safe Schools

Resource Kit

Overview

Schools, parents, and communities can work together to establish safe, supportive schools. Safety in schools may include anti-bullying, safe social media use, inclusive culture, trust, violence prevention, or violence preparedness. All are issues that concern schools and families. The establishment of a safe, supportive school climate can facilitate any actions that schools need to take regarding bullying or violence.

- ❑ For more on school climate and culture, check out the [School Culture Resource Kit](#).
- ❑ For more information on safe use of social media, check out the [Effective Use of Social Media Resource Kit](#).
- ❑ For more information on the effects of poverty in schools, check out the [Poverty in Our Schools Resource Kit](#).

WHAT WE KNOW

11 Characteristics of Safe Schools

At the end of the 20th Century, as acts of violence in schools began to occur more frequently across the nation, more attention was given to the characteristics of safe schools. As part of that trend, in 1998, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement developed *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*. The guide remains the cornerstone of safe school research and suggests that effective prevention, interventions, and crisis management strategies are most effective in school communities that demonstrate the following 11 characteristics.

- ❑ Focus on academic achievement.
- ❑ Promote good citizenship and character.
- ❑ Support students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace.
- ❑ Involve families in meaningful ways.
- ❑ Develop links to the community.
- ❑ Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff.
- ❑ Discuss safety issues openly.
- ❑ Help children feel safe expressing their feelings.
- ❑ Offer extended day programs for children.
- ❑ Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions.
- ❑ Treat students with equal respect.

(Access the complete guide: [Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools](#).)

Schools, Families, and Communities Working Together

What Schools Can Do:

- ❑ **Establish and reinforce clear school policies:** Make sure your school's anti-bullying, harassment, and non-discrimination policies are current and reflect district and [state guidelines](#). Develop an anti-bullying policy aligned to the SD Department of Education's [model policy](#) and include clear definitions and consequences.
- ❑ **Establish and enforce technology use guidelines:** Have students/families sign acceptable use agreements. Publicize policies and guidelines in multiple ways.
- ❑ **Encourage reporting:** Establish safe and confidential reporting mechanisms for bullying and procedures for investigation and response.
- ❑ **Involve parents, family, and community members:** Parents and family members are vital school community members. When everyone conveys the same message about bias, hate and discrimination, young people hear that message.
- ❑ **Provide support to targets:** Ensure that the crisis intervention team, school counselors, and social workers have the skills and knowledge to support students who have been targeted.

(Adapted from ADL's ["11 Ways Schools Can Help Students Feel Safe in Challenging Times."](#))

What Teachers Can Do in Their Classrooms:

- ❑ **Be more approachable:** Take student concerns seriously, invest the time and space to listen before moving into problem-solving mode, and be a role model by not engaging in stereotyping, name-calling, or bullying.
- ❑ **Teach about bias:** What happens in the classroom is valued and important. At the onset engage students in a process to [create an anti-bias learning environment](#). Take the time to teach about bias, either by doing direct instruction or by integrating anti-bias education into the curriculum. Use current events, literature, social studies, and other subjects to address bias, diversity, bullying, and social justice.
- ❑ **Set a tone of respect in the classroom:** This means managing student behavior in the classroom well. Well-managed classrooms are the least likely to have bullying.
- ❑ **Manage classrooms to prevent bullying:** Create ground rules. Develop rules with students so they set their own climate of respect and responsibility. Use positive terms, like what to do, rather than what not to do. Reinforce the rules. Reward good behavior. Try to affirm good behavior four to five times for every one criticism of bad behavior. Use one-on-one feedback, and do not publicly reprimand. Help students correct their behaviors.
- ❑ **Encourage students to be active:** Activism is another way that young people can do something about the bias, discrimination and hate they see in their schools, online community, neighborhood and world—and proactively make it a better place.

(Adapted from ADL's ["11 Ways Schools Can Help Students Feel Safe in Challenging Times"](#) and stopbullying.gov's ["Build a Safe Environment."](#))

Family & Community Resources: *Safe Schools*



Read

The **S.D. Department of Education's** [*Guide to Inspiring Partnerships Between Home & School*](#) offers suggestions for ways parents can actively participate in making the children's schools safer and more inviting.

Melissa Darcey's blog on the *Safewise* website suggests [*"5 Ways You Can Help Your Kids Stay Safe at School."*](#)

Derek Maul, a writer for *All-Pro Dad*, offers suggestions for keeping students, especially teenagers, safe in [*"How to Keep Kids Safe at School."*](#)



Listen

Suzanne McCabe, *Scholastic* editor-at-large, discusses ways parents can talk to children about school safety in this podcast titled [*"Talking with Kids about School Violence and Trauma."*](#)



Watch

Watch, with your children, [*Wonder*](#), available on several streaming services and often at libraries. The movie, based on a book with the same title by [*R. J. Palacio*](#), tells the story of Auggie, a child whose severe facial difference results in taunting and ostracism from peers until one friend's kindness helps to change other students' behaviors.



Do

Improve school safety by applying these suggestions from the National Crime Prevention Council's [*"Caregiver's Guide to School Safety and Security"*](#). Listen to your children's concerns; educate yourself about school safety; involve yourself with school staff, school activities, other parents, and community businesses; advocate for and effect change.

School Resources: *Safe Schools*



Read

Review **South Dakota Department of Education** resources and guidelines. The department provides a plethora of resources focused on school safety: <https://doe.sd.gov/schoolsafety/>.

The **Anti-Defamation League (ADL)** suggests educators reflect on what students say they need in "[Ten Things Students Wish Teachers Knew about Name-Calling.](#)"

The **National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments** provides a variety of research sources on the topic of school safety, including the ways that [school safety affects all students](#).



Listen

Dr. Amy Klinger and Amanda Klinger discuss school safety, especially violence in schools, in a series of podcasts on the [School Safety News](#).



Watch

Këri Bolding's presentation "[Safe Schools Video for Teachers: Bullying Prevention](#)" for the course TED 626: Classroom Management reflects the key understandings about bullying and prompts educators to deepen their commitment to proactive prevention in order to create and maintain safe schools.

In this **Facing History and Ourselves** webinar, veteran school administrators share their best ideas for "[Creating Safe Schools: The Role of School Leaders in Creating a Culture of Kindness and Respect.](#)"



Do

Focus on Kindness. [Tour of Kindness](#) creator, **Justine Kougl**, emphasizes that kindness and empathy conquer bullying and peer cruelty.

Practice and Communicate. Principals under pressure to keep schools, students, and staff safe can clearly explain existing safety measures; invite feedback from students, staff, and families; and practice response measures with staff. For more ideas, see **Education Week's** "[What Principals Can Do to Keep Schools Safe Amid Shooting Fears.](#)"