

## Security is not safety: America's urgent need to transform school culture to stop violence

By Rick Phillips, M.S. Ed, Founder of Community Matters

**S**chool shootings are horrific events that are forever imprinted on our collective psyche. As tragic as they are, however, school shootings represent only a small percentage of the physical and emotional violence that plagues our schools. More often it's the in-school incidents of bullying, harassment, cyber-bullying and other types of mistreatment that foster the conditions where some targeted students seek revenge through physical attacks and gun violence.

Any rational approach to making our schools safe learning environments first must begin by unpacking and understanding this premise: *Security and safety are not the same thing.* Security and safety are two different and necessary responses to effectively preventing and stopping school violence.

Security addresses the external, physical and logistical actions taken to "secure the perimeter" of our schools, recently referred to as "hardening the target." Security is one element of the "Outside-In Approach," which emphasizes:

- Security equipment and personnel
- Staff "on guard," looking for trouble and threats
- Zero-tolerance policies and practices
- Highly controlled environments

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Security measures are extremely expensive and, by themselves, have not resulted in significantly safer schools. While schools can keep most weapons from entering campuses, they can't keep the students out, including the ones who bring undetectable weapons to school like prejudice, grudges, values that regard violence as a valid problem-solving option and cyber-aggression.

Safety, on the other hand, focuses internally on the importance of building a positive social and emotional culture and climate inside schools. This response is referred to as the "Inside-Out Approach," which emphasizes:

- Relationships and connection
- Students viewed by adults as allies in keeping schools safe

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# Transforming school culture to stop violence

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- Connective/corrective discipline policies and practices
- The school as community

Safety is more than “hardening the target” and locking trouble out. It’s an environmental strategy where staff and students commit to the values of accepting others, respecting differences, resolving disagreements peacefully, and speaking up for one another when mean and hurtful things are being said or done. Safety is about engaging, equipping and empowering everyone in the school community to look out for one another, thereby influencing and changing social norms to make it “cooler to be kind” rather than “cooler to be cruel.”

Too often security and safety are viewed as being in direct competition with each other, rather than being seen as integral components of comprehensive, effective and sustainable school safety plans. As a result, many educators feel pressured to choose one approach over the other, compromising the ability to work together to develop the most effective solutions to school violence.



## Students can make the difference

Recent history has demonstrated that *adults can't make schools safe by themselves*. While adults are in the best position to make schools more *secure*, students are in the best position to make schools *safer*. Consider the following:

- **Students see**, hear and know things that adults don't.
- **Students can intervene** in ways that adults can't.
- **Students are generally** on the scene of an incident well before adults know about it.
- **Students can influence** the behavior of their peers by their actions.

Unfortunately, in spite of these attributes, many educators don't recognize their students' potential and their capacity for being active partners with adults in making schools safer. They do things *to them, for them and at them* rather than *with them*. At the same time, many of these very same schools implore students to report what they see, hear or know through the use of electronic reporting tools, and then wonder why they're not getting the level of student participation or involvement they anticipated.

Why is it that many students are reluctant to report? In a youth culture



that has adopted the phrase “snitches get stitches,” students first need to feel respected, engaged, empowered and connected to caring adults before they'll be motivated and feel safe enough to bring vital information forward.

When schools engage, equip and empower students to speak up persuasively and effectively with aggressors, neutralize destructive gossip and rumors, support targeted students, reach out to excluded or isolated students and mediate everyday conflicts, the evidence is clear: Young people will step up, speak up, take action, and report risks and potential incidents to trusted adults.

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*Founded in 1996, Community Matters has evolved from its earliest focus on youth development and bullying prevention to become a widely respected consulting, training and presenting organization. Community Matters has worked with more than 1,700 schools, agencies and organizations across 38 states, Puerto Rico, Guam and Canada. To learn how SIA can help bring the services of Community Matters to your school, contact Debrah Sherrington at [dsherrington@sia-jpa.org](mailto:dsherrington@sia-jpa.org).*



## Custodian injuries on the job can be reduced with prevention and teamwork

By Eric Thygesen, SIA Prevention Services

**C**ustodians play very important roles in our children's education. They keep our campuses, classrooms and facilities clean, which in turn creates positive surroundings for learning. Because of the very nature of their work, custodians are prone to injury and prevention can be tough. Nonetheless, many typical custodian injuries can be avoided by using proper body mechanics and assistance devices.



Back and shoulder sprains and strains are the most common conditions, typically caused by overexertion. There are two types of overexertion: cumulative and strenuous. Cumulative is when an injury happens because of continuous trauma over time. Strenuous overexertion is trauma that causes tissue failure. Pulling, reaching, lifting and twisting are examples of movements that can cause injuries. More specifically, lifting trash into dumpsters, pulling on the can liners, and constant bending and carrying are all examples of tasks that custodians regularly perform that can cause excessive forces on the spine.

In 2016, the Workers' Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau (WCIRB) stated that the average cost per indemnity claim was \$82,234. That's money that can be better spent on books, pencils, desks and paper for our children's classrooms.

So what can be done? Proper body mechanics are the most important things to focus on. Knowing how to maneuver correctly while performing certain job duties can be the most effective for preventing injuries. Additionally, devices, such as hand trucks, carts and lifts, can help with moving or transferring heavy loads. Developing a culture of teamwork also is important. Custodial staff should be encouraged to ask for help when something is too heavy or awkward to lift.

All are examples of ways anyone, not just custodians, can save their bodies from unwanted injuries.

*SIA can provide training to help your staff learn better body mechanics for their jobs. Contact the Prevention Services Department at [preventionservices@sia-jpa.org](mailto:preventionservices@sia-jpa.org).*

## AB 10: Feminine products availability in low-income school restrooms

By Bryan Moffitt, SIA ADA Specialist

**A** new California law requires public schools that meet defined grade-level and student population poverty thresholds to stock their girls' restrooms with feminine hygiene products at no charge to the students. Assembly Bill 10 (2017 Chapter 687) became effective on January 1, 2018, and is intended to provide female students at lower-income schools with readily available access to tampons and pads in an effort to reduce missed class time.

Only those schools that meet the following criteria are required to comply with the law: 1) any individual or combination of classes from grades 6 through 12, inclusive, and 2) a minimum 40 percent pupil poverty threshold level as defined by federal law. The law states that feminine products are required to be stocked in 50 percent of a school's restrooms. This will effectively translate to the installation of menstrual product dispensers that have a free/no-cost option in all female student restrooms for qualifying schools.

Restroom dispensers, including feminine product units, must conform with the accessibility provisions contained in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and California Building Code (CBC) standards. Important accessibility



considerations include:

- 1) the dispenser's operable parts, which cannot require tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist;
- 2) appropriate unit location in the restroom with clear floor space and an accessible route;
- and 3) unit installation

height with all operable parts no more than 40 inches above the finished floor. Product disposal units also have specific mounting location requirements that have recently been incorporated into the 2016 CBC.

For more information on AB 10 or any of the accessibility requirements, contact SIA's ADA Specialist Bryan Moffitt at [bmoffitt@sia-jpa.org](mailto:bmoffitt@sia-jpa.org).







## Use WeTip

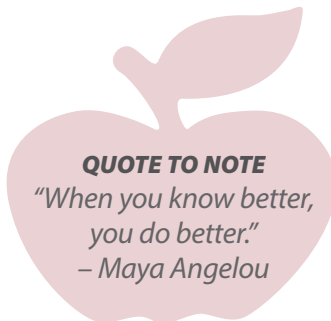
For more information, contact  
Teresa Franco at  
tfranco@sia-jpa.org or  
916-364-1281, ext. 1256.

**WeTip**  
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1-800-78-CRIME



## StopIT!

For additional information  
on starting this program in your schools,  
contact Rick Jenkins  
at rjenkins@sia-jpa.org.



### QUOTE TO NOTE

*"When you know better,  
you do better."  
– Maya Angelou*

*The material in this newsletter should be part of your  
Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).*

*Keep a copy of this newsletter in your IIPP binder.*

# Encourage staff to rate their own performance skills, share goals

## Feedback for success

**F**eedback is an important coaching strategy. Yet even more important is guiding staffers to reflect on their own performance and draw conclusions that point them toward future success. Coaching questions such as the following can encourage staffers to analyze their own results:

- **"How would you rate** your recent performance and why?"
- **"What do you think** you did well?"
- **"Where did you do not so well?** Why do you think this is the case?"
- **"How do you think** you could improve your performance next time?"

The key is to focus on identifying specific behaviors, skills and results so staffers can learn and improve.

## Build some buzz

Creating a sense of common purpose and shared interests among staff also is important and can be accomplished with questions like these:

- **"What have we done** in the past that served us well when we faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles?"
- **"How can we make** a difference in the lives of our students and their families?"
- **"What makes us** feel good when we come to work?"
- **"If you could be in charge** for one day, what would you make happen?"



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