

*What did you know?
When did you know it?
What did you do about it?*

Mary Margaret Kerr

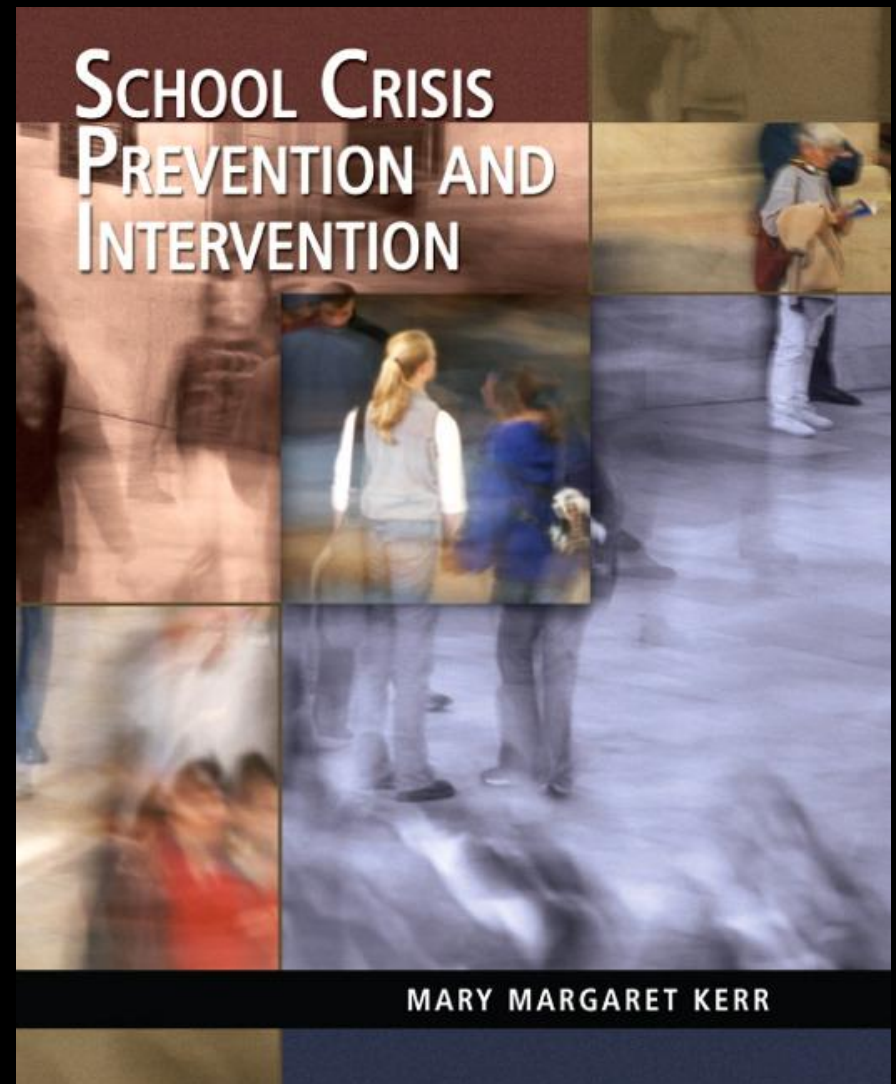
STAR-Center 2012


We hope you will learn to. . .

- Identify risk situations common to K-12 schools
- Identify practical risk assessment practices for K-12 schools
- Identify risk management strategies found to be effective in K-12 schools

Some of the material here is excerpted from:

Kerr, M.M. (2009)
School Crisis Prevention and Intervention. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson

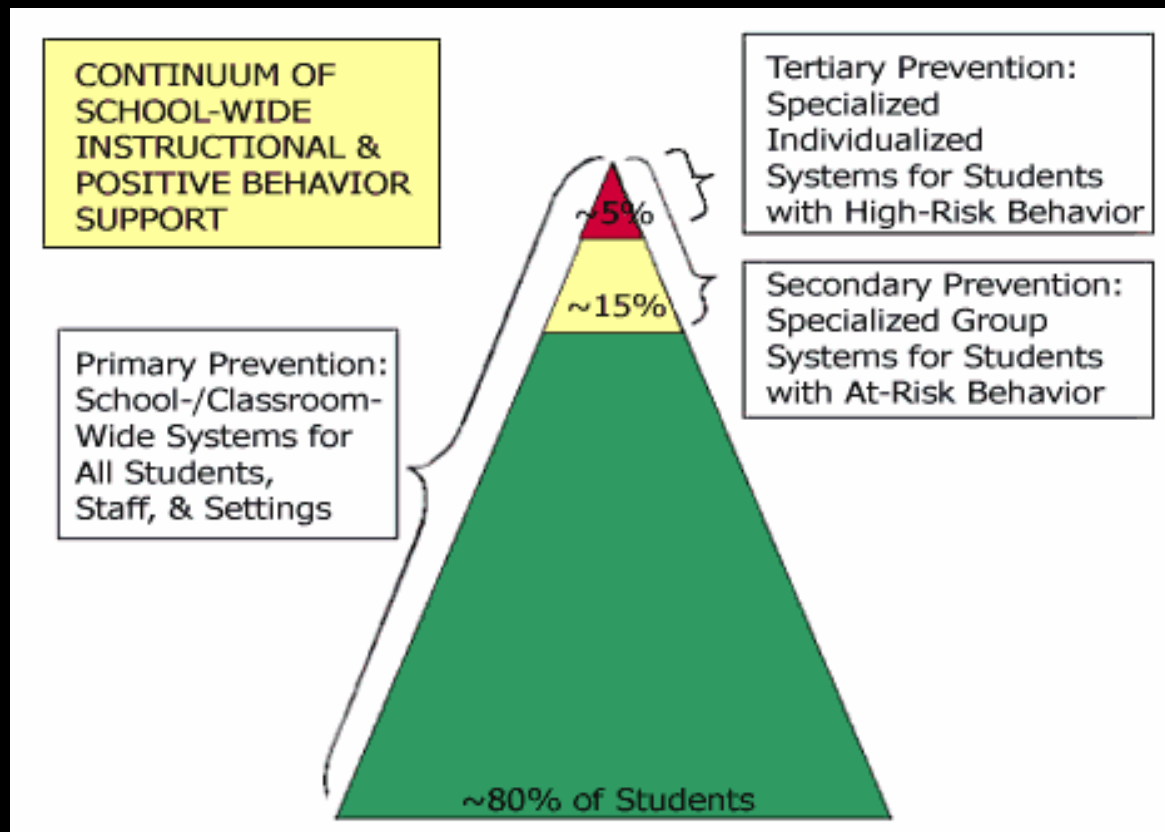


A close-up photograph of a bouquet of bright yellow chrysanthemums on the left. To the right, a portion of a brown teddy bear is visible, and a newspaper with some text is partially seen in the background.

Public concerns
regarding school
safety have
prompted us to
think more
preventatively.

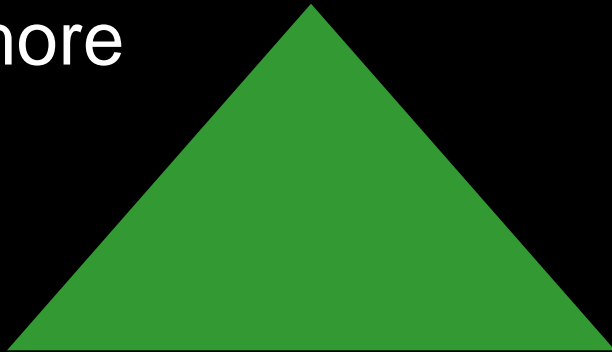
Let's review the levels of prevention schools are beginning to employ.

The PBIS Model: Universal, Targeted, and Individualized Supports for Students



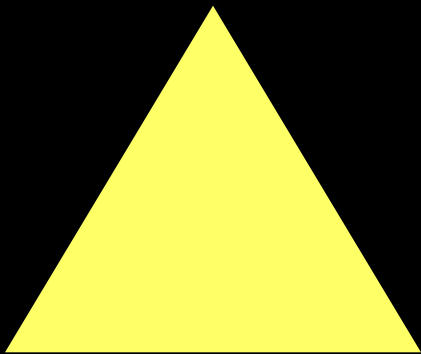
Primary prevention is universal.

- applied through the efforts of **all** school staff and across **all** students
- **80%** of students will respond favorably and require nothing more



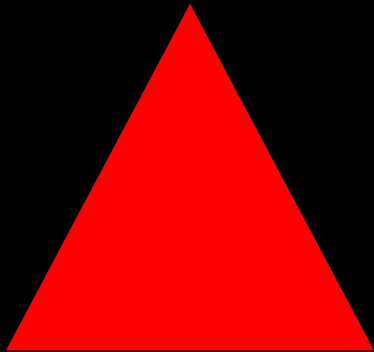
Secondary prevention (targeted intervention) supports students at risk.

- small groups of students
- about 15% of students need these targeted interventions



Tertiary prevention (intensive intervention)

- ameliorates the effects of a serious problem, so that students can learn
- about **5%** of students require intensive intervention



Could we outline **school-wide** crisis prevention according to these levels, too?



Yes.

Primary prevention is universal.

- applied through the efforts of **all** school staff and across **all** students
- Example: Staff on hall duty share their information and intelligence about concerns.



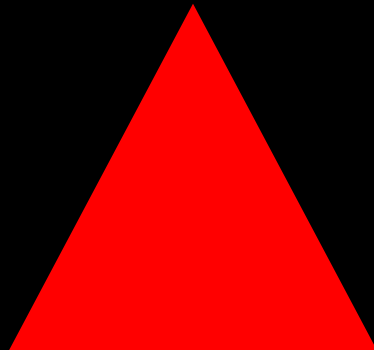
Secondary prevention (targeted intervention) addresses students at risk.

- **Small** groups of students who are vulnerable or who could develop harmful behavior
- Example: Staff reach out to passive, isolated students likely to become bullying victims



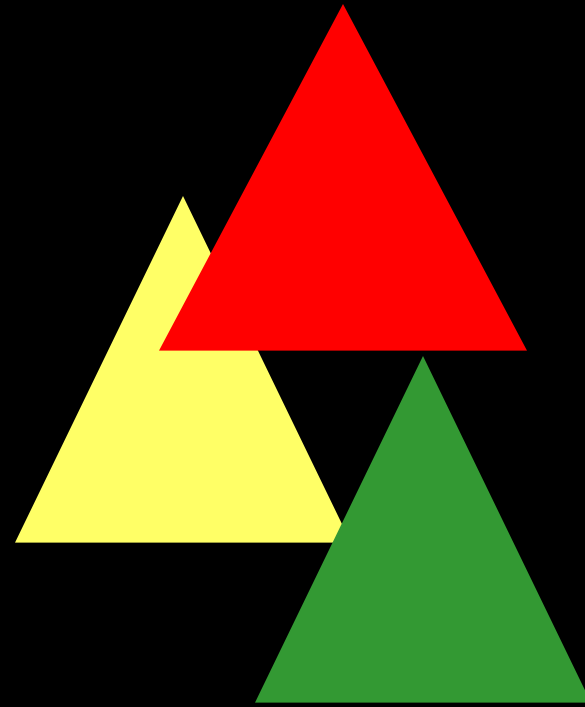
Tertiary prevention (intensive intervention)

- ameliorates the effects of a serious problem and requires intensive intervention
- Example: Teachers monitor a student with severe depression



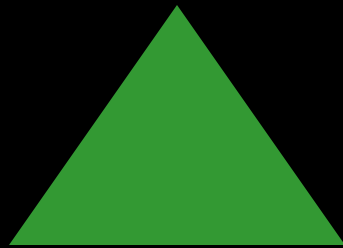
Our agenda

- Now, let's examine research and practice in each of these levels of prevention:
 - Universal
 - Targeted
 - Intensive
- We will first examine violence prevention, then take a look at suicide prevention.



First, let's revisit a basic principle of workplace violence prevention. . .

Safety is everyone's responsibility.



A detailed floor plan of a building's first floor. The plan shows various rooms including classrooms, a gymnasium, an auditorium, and a lobby. A large green triangle is positioned on the right side of the plan, pointing towards a specific area. The text 'Assessing the Risk: Mapping Unowned Spaces' is overlaid in the center of the plan.

Assessing the Risk: Mapping Unowned Spaces

An Interview with Ron Astor

FIRST FLOOR

Let's identify the unowned spaces in your school's day.

- Bus stops

- Before school

-

-

-

-

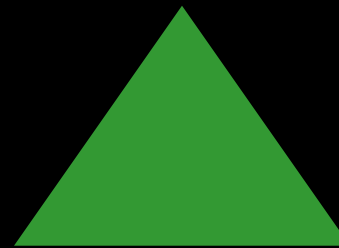
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Second, let's review the four cornerstones of safety.



- information
- supervision
- intelligence
- surveillance





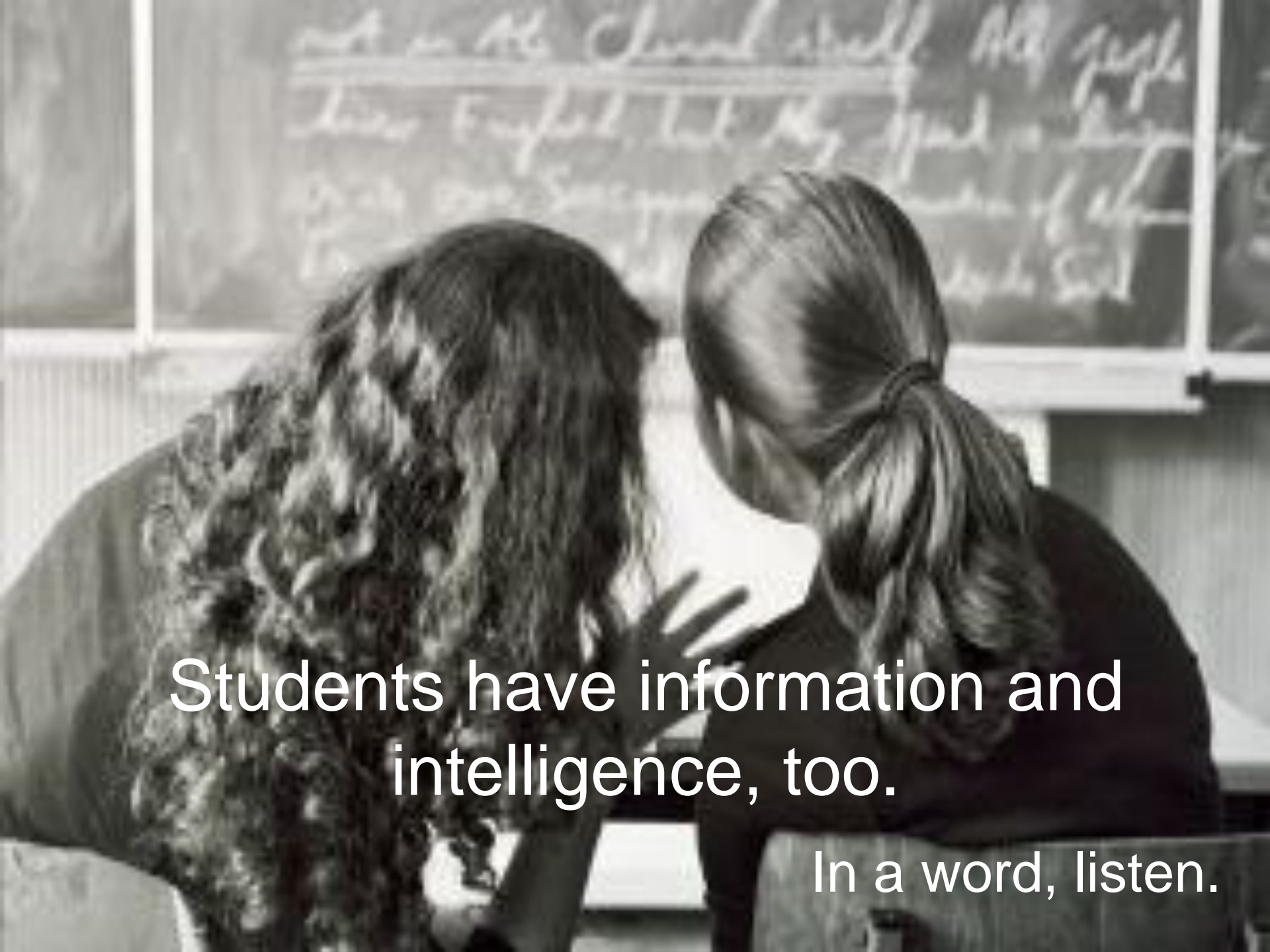
An illustration

Intelligence lost

“In over half of the incidents, the attacker told more than one person about his ideas/plan. For example, in one case an attacker made comments to at least 24 friends and classmates about his interest in killing other kids, building bombs, or carrying out an attack at the school. Some peers knew detailed information about the attacker’s plans while others knew “something spectacular” was going to happen in school on a particular date.”⁶

“In virtually all of the cases in this study the person told was a peer---a friend, schoolmate, or sibling. In only two cases did such a peer notify an adult of the idea or plan.”

“In fewer than one quarter of all incidents the attacker communicated a threat to his target(s) prior to the attack.”⁶

A black and white photograph of two students in a classroom. The student on the left has long, dark, curly hair and is wearing a dark sweater. The student on the right has long, light-colored hair tied back in a ponytail and is also wearing a dark sweater. They are both looking towards a chalkboard in the background. The chalkboard has some faint, illegible handwriting on it. The text "Students have information and intelligence, too." is overlaid in white on the lower half of the image.

Students have information and
intelligence, too.

In a word, listen.

The Bystander Study

198 bystanders (per incident from 0 to 28)

15 students interviewed:

- six from schools that had averted an incident;
 - nine from schools where a shooting occurred
- Eight schools represented.



**PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF
POTENTIAL SCHOOL-
BASED
VIOLENCE:
INFORMATION STUDENTS
LEARN
MAY PREVENT A
TARGETED ATTACK**

UNITED STATES SECRET
SERVICE AND
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, DC
May 2008



How did they know? When did they know it?

The relationships between the bystanders and the attackers, as well as when and how the bystanders came upon information about the planned attacks, varied.

1. When did they know?

Out of 91 cases reviewed:

- The majority received the information more than a day before the attack.
- 59% were told days or weeks in advance
- 22% were told months or years prior
- 19% were told a few hours or less before the attack.

2. When did bystanders share?



No Action

Actively
conveyed
information.

Only 4% of the
individuals with prior
knowledge attempted to
dissuade the attacker
from violence.

3. Why did some bystanders come forward, while others did not?

4. What affected disclosure?

Four factors supported the belief that it could never happen

- Belief that such talk was attention seeking behavior
- Belief that it would never actually be carried out
- The student making the threat did not seem serious – joking
- Overt and repetitive statements - led people to believe they were not serious.

5. Misjudgment



- Bystanders underestimated the immediacy – spend too much time pondering
- The level of specificity of information was not a determinant of the bystander's assessment of imminence.

More findings....out of incidents studied

- 81% revealed 1 person knew
- 59% revealed more than 1 person knew
- 93% of those who knew were peers, siblings, or friends
- 93% of the perpetrators exhibited concerning behavior prior to the incident

Implications for School Policy

- Encourage reporting of threats or disturbing behaviors
- Define avenues for reporting – including anonymous reporting
- Convey that action will be taken and then confirmation provided to reporting person

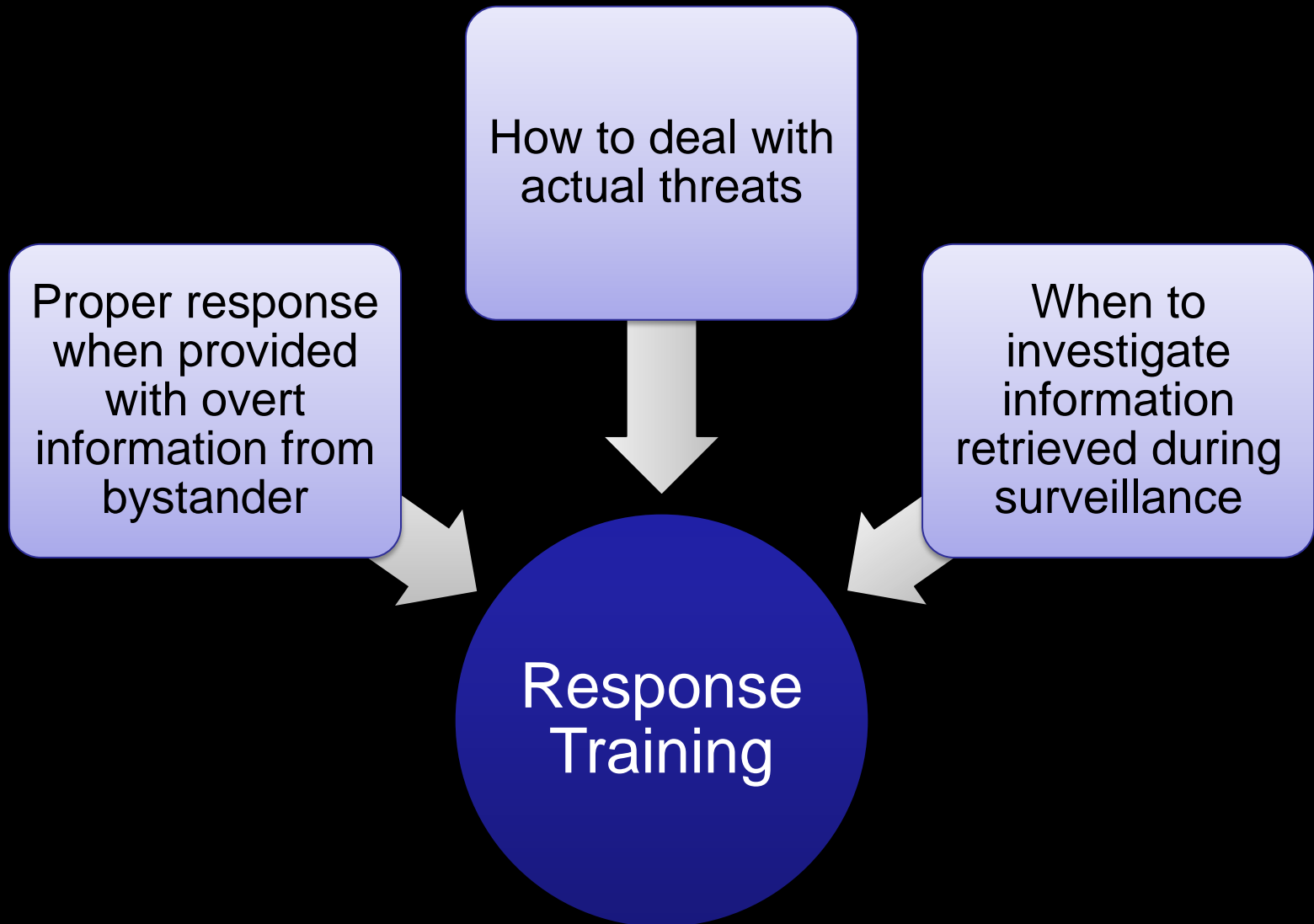
2. Policy, cont'd.

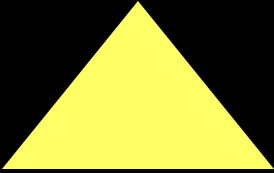
- Define what types of student information can be shared, with whom, and under what conditions
- Define roles and responsibilities
- Include law enforcement and mental health officials

2. Policy, cont'd.

- Track reporting data
 - Type of criminal act
 - Frequency of criminal act
 - Track regardless of law enforcement intervention

3. Response Training





Now, let's look at the research on situations that set the occasion for aggression. . .

Aggression is often a response to being humiliated.

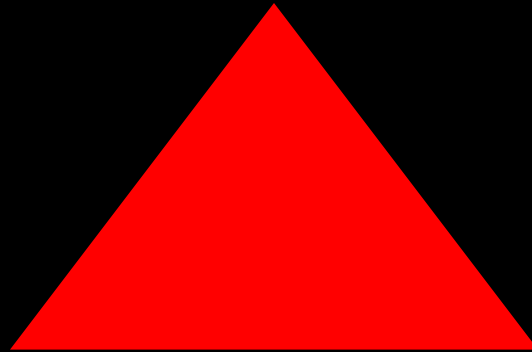
Youth prone to carry guns report that shame can only be undone through aggression.⁵

Don't be an "old tomato!"


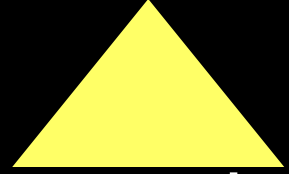

People who need to control others
often evoke aggressive behavior.



Third, let's look at intensive
prevention strategies



Violence is the product of an interaction among three factors:

- The violent **p**erson 
- Triggering **C**onditions that lead the individual to see violence as the only “way out” or solution 
- A **S**etting that permits the violence or does not stop it. (Vossekuil, Holden, & Fein, 1995) 

Threat Assessment Protocols



Essential to the success of a school-based threat assessment model are these factors:

- A shared knowledge and conceptual framework regarding violence and threat assessment, which reduces the likelihood that personnel will engage in reactionary behaviors;
- A multidisciplinary, interagency team approach, to ensure not only multiple perspectives and objectivity in evaluating threats, but to facilitate information-sharing and actions necessitated by the conclusions;
- Authority to conduct interagency threat assessments;
- Understanding of the relevant laws and regulations;
- Training that provides team members with the skills they require to conduct a threat assessment. (Cornell, Sheras, Kaplan, McConville, Douglass, Elkon, et al., 2004; Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, & Reddy, 2002)

Factors to Consider

(What did you know?)

- 1. What are the student's motives and goals?**
 - What motivated the student to make the statements or take the actions that caused him or her to come to attention?
 - Does the situation or circumstance that led to these statements or actions still exist?
 - Does the student have a major grievance or grudge? Against whom?
 - What efforts have been made to resolve the problem and what has been the result? Does the potential attacker feel that any part of the problem is resolved or see any alternatives?

2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?

- What, if anything, has the student communicated to someone else (targets, friends, other students, teachers, family, others) or written in a diary, journal, or Web site concerning his or her ideas and/or intentions?
- Have friends been alerted or “warned away”?

3. Has the subject shown inappropriate interest in any of the following:

- School attacks or attackers;
- Weapons (including recent, acquisition of any relevant weapon);
- Incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers).

4. Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviors? These behaviors might include:

- Developing an attack idea or plan;
- Making efforts to acquire or practice with weapons;
- Casing, or checking out, possible sites and areas for attack;
- Rehearsing attacks or ambushes.

5. Does the student have the intent and capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence?

- How organized is the student's thinking and behavior?
- Does the student have the means, (e.g., access to weapon) to carry out an attack?

6. Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?

- Is there information to suggest that the student is experiencing desperation and/or despair?
- Has the student experienced a recent failure, loss and/or loss of status?
- Is the student known to be having difficulty coping with a stressful event?
- Is the student now, or has the student ever been, suicidal or “accident-prone”?
- Has the student engaged in behavior that suggests that he or she has considered ending their life?

7. Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult?

- Does the student have at least one relationship with an adult where the student feels that he or she can confide in the adult and believes that the adult will listen without judging or jumping to conclusions? (Students with trusting relationships with adults may be directed away from violence and despair and toward hope.)
- Is the student emotionally connected to—or disconnected from—other students?
- Has the student previously come to someone's attention or raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or supportive services?

8. Does the student see violence as an acceptable—or desirable—or the only-way to solve problems?

- Does the setting around the student (friends, fellow students, parents, teachers, adults) explicitly or implicitly support or endorse violence as a way of resolving problems or disputes?
- Has the student been “dared” by others to engage in an act of violence?

9. Is the student's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?

- Does information from collateral interviews and from the student's own behavior confirm or dispute what the student says is going on?

10. Are other people concerned about the student's potential for violence?

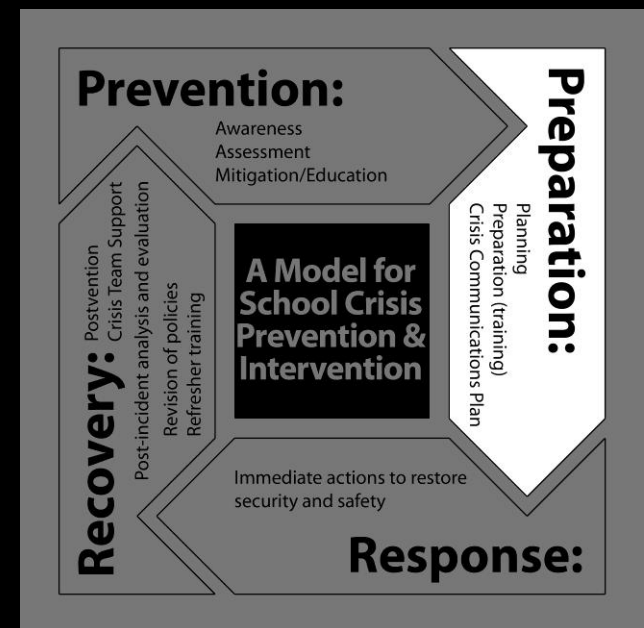
- Are those who know the student concerned that he or she might take action based on violent ideas or plans?
- Are those who know the student concerned about a specific target?
- Have those who know the student witnessed recent changes or escalations in mood and behavior?

- What factors in the student's life and/or environment might increase or decrease the likelihood that the student will attempt to mount an attack at school?
- What is the response of other persons who know about the student's ideas or plan to mount an attack? (Do those who know about the student's ideas actively discourage the student from acting violently, encourage the student to attack, deny the possibility of violence, passively collude with an attack, etc.?)

Source: Adapted from Fein, R., Vossekuil, B., Pollack, W., Borum, R., Modzeleski, W., & Reddy, M. Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program and U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, Washington, D.C., 2002.

Common mistakes in threat assessment

- The most common mistake. . . is lack of clear authority to fully manage threatening situations and to make critical decisions (Deisinger, G. quoted in Pavela, 2008).



Suicidal people may view death
as their only way out of an
unbearable condition. . . .

“Prior to the incident, nearly 3/4 of the attackers either threatened to kill themselves, made suicidal gestures, or tried to kill themselves; more than half of the attackers had a history of feeling extremely depressed or desperate.”

Universal School-based Suicide Prevention



Common Mistakes

- Only selected staff know the warning signs.
- Parents and community aren't sure how to access help in a crisis, or nights and weekends.

Solutions

- Be sure everyone knows the basics. 1-800-273-TALK has free resources.
- Give everyone's parent the contact information they need to access help 24/7.
- “What did you know?” campaign

Targeted Suicide School-based Prevention

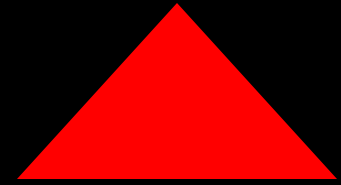
Common Mistakes

- Students' risk behaviors go unnoticed.
- Staff, parents, and students aren't clear about the steps to share their concerns.
- Targeted group interventions operate without any outcome data.

Solutions

- Use the PAYS or the YRBS to assess risk behaviors
- Create and distribute a visual to explain exactly what to do with concerns.
- Write the data into the contracts.

Intensive Suicide School-based Prevention



Common Mistakes

- Silos of information co-exist within a school.
- The school has no protocol for interviewing for suicide risk.
- The involuntary assessment policy and procedures have been overlooked.
- There is no plan for after-school time.

Solutions

- Develop an expedited information sharing and tracking process.
- Adopt a standard suicide risk assessment protocol for all pupil services staff to use. Use a modified version for other staff.
- Have an after-hours plan.
- Practice it all!

In conclusion, let's explore a few examples

Oakland Shooting Suspect Targeted School Administrator to 'Settle Score,' Say Police

- the man accused of going on a shooting rampage. . . was attempting to "settle a score" with a female school administrator when he carried out the fatal attack. . .
- [he] told investigators that he was upset over his recent expulsion from the school. . . He also claimed that he was distraught for having been teased by other students for his strong Korean accent. He had also recently lost two close family members. . .
- <http://www.christianpost.com/news/oakland-shooting-suspect-targeted-school-administrator-to-settle-score-say-police-72620/>

What did you know?

When did you know it?

- Several female students were engaged in a fight during the transition between classes. . . Student was severely injured and transported to hospital. The fight began the previous day with bullying. That same day, a parent called a Parent Hotline to indicate that there was communication between female students that suggested that the fight would come to school the following day. Administrators were out of the building at Professional Development at the time of the fight.

Violence is a process, as well as an act. Violent behavior does not occur in a vacuum. . . violent acts often are the culmination of long-developing, identifiable trails of problems, conflicts, disputes, and failures. . . Perpetrators of violence consider, plan, and prepare before engaging in violent acts. *A key to prevention is to identify these behaviors.*

Websites

Interview with Ron Astor

[http://tcla.gseis.ucla.edu/reportcard/features/
5-6/astor.html](http://tcla.gseis.ucla.edu/reportcard/features/5-6/astor.html)

This interview with Ron Astor will help you assess the “unowned spaces and times” in your school. Astor explains the link between school climate and school safety in this rare interview.

*Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to
Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating
Safe School Climates*

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/threatassessmentguide.pdf>

Since June 1999, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service have partnered to address the prevention of school shootings. Experts in threat assessment have delineated a process for identifying, evaluating, and addressing threats in school settings, based on their years of research and experience.

The Bystander Study

Pollack, W.S., Modzeleski, W., & Rooney, G. (2008). Prior knowledge of potential school-based violence: Information students learn may prevent a targeted attack. United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education

www.secretservice.gov/ntac/bystander_study.pdf

*Bomb Threat Response: An Interactive Planning
Tool For Schools*

<http://www.threatplan.org/>

(U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools; U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Washington, D.C. , 2004)

This free CD-ROM-based program teaches school officials how to prepare for bomb threats. Included are a supporting web site and quick-reference cards that can be customized for your school.

The Appropriate and Effective Use of Security Technologies in U.S. Schools: A Guide for Schools and Law Enforcement Agencies

www.ncjrs.gov/school/178265_1.pdf

This document includes guidelines for law enforcement agencies and schools regarding security technologies.

Designing Safe Schools

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/>

This paper explains the concept of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) in the design and remodeling of schools.

The Final Report and Findings of the "Safe School Initiative": Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf>

This report summarizes the U.S. Secret Service's expert analysis of incidents of targeted school violence, including the incident at Columbine High School.

www.sbbh.pitt.edu

- **Check out this website for over 400 resources in children's mental health, including presentations, brochures, podcasts for youth, and guides.**

For more information, contact
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