

# School Safety Monthly

July 2015

## Student Supervision

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Photo: Rachel Wilson



## Message from the Editor

In this month's issue of *School Safety Monthly*, we focus on effective student supervision within our schools. School safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness assessments can all be improved by practicing proper student supervision. The first article, "*Five Ways Effective Student Supervision makes Schools Safer*," explains how improving student

supervision results in safer schools in each of these critical areas.

The next article, "*Benefits of Improved Student Supervision*," further explains the benefits of improving student supervision as it relates to civil liability and a reduction of students entering the criminal justice system. We will also highlight how schools can

include student supervision in the school safety assessment process.

If you have any comments or suggestions on *School Safety Monthly*, contact us at [our website](#) or on our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/SafeHavensIntl](#) or on Twitter via [@SafeHavensIntl](#).  
-Morgan



Photo: Rachel Wilson



# Five Ways Effective Student Supervision Can Make Schools Safer

by Michael Dorn

American schools have spent billions of dollars on school security and emergency preparedness measures in reaction to the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut. Sales of security cameras, visitor management systems, buzzer access systems and a host of other school security technologies have soared. Similarly, schools have invested heavily in a variety of technology solutions designed to enhance their level of emergency preparedness.

Many of these efforts have improved school security and emergency preparedness. At the same time, some of these same schools are not nearly as safe as they could be if school officials had also focused their efforts on no-cost and low-cost efforts to enhance

student supervision.

When our analysts perform school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness assessments, they formally evaluate student supervision because it can result in improvements in all five of these important life-safety areas. Here are some of the ways we can make our schools better overall through simply improving supervision:

**1. Student safety:** Improvements in student supervision can reduce the chances that a student will be struck by buses, a vehicle in the parking lot or other traffic during morning arrival. School-related traffic fatalities are among the leading causes of school-related

deaths, so this can be especially important.

**2. School security:** Improving student supervision can reduce the chances that an aggressor can enter a school and leave with a student. This occurred in a tragic rape and murder case in Ohio many years ago. In this disturbing case, a man entered an elementary school, walked out of the school with a seven year-old girl, and took her to his house where he subsequently raped and killed her. After killing her, the man walked into a police station and confessed. This brutal attack demonstrates just how critical student supervision can be.

**3. School climate:** Improved student supervision can help to reduce the frequency and severity of bullying behaviors and other behaviors that can impact school climate. Increased staff presence can also affect the interactions between students and improve rapport between students and staff.

**4. School culture:** Effective and professional student supervision can improve the level of connectivity between staff and students.

**5. School emergency preparedness:** improved student supervision can improve survivability in crisis situations,



Photo: Rachel Wilson



ranging from common medical emergencies to rare but catastrophic events like tornadoes and major acts of violence. For example, the effective supervision of students combined with extremely fast reaction by teachers during the Arapaho High School active shooter incident in Littleton, Colorado reduced the number of casualties. According to school officials, properly deployed teachers denied the aggressor the opportunity to attack the more than 80 students in two main hallways through immediate protective actions. In this case, the attacker opened fire on two students as he entered the school.

Security camera footage revealed that during the seven seconds that the shooter was firing at these

victims, teachers either evacuated or moved the remaining students to lockable rooms. The combination of properly executed lockdowns and evacuations averted additional victimization. While this case involved the tragic death of an innocent student, the aggressor was denied easy access to even more innocent victims in part because staff members were practicing good student supervision at the time. Effective student supervision combined with empowerment of staff to implement protective actions on their own initiative kept a tragedy from becoming an even more deadly event.

I know of no other school safety strategy that offers as many significant improvements in all five of these life-safety areas as

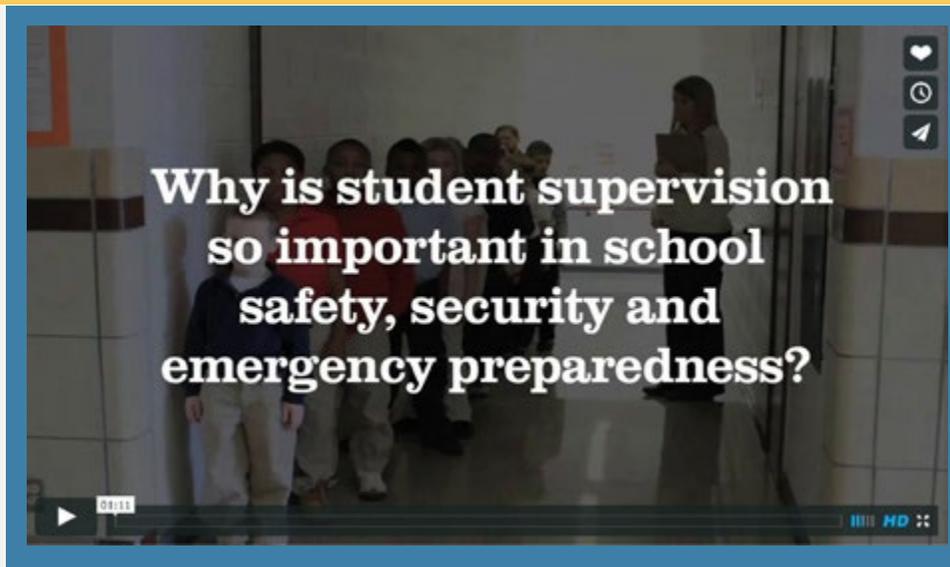
efforts to implement and maintain polite, thoughtful and effective student supervision. Over the years, I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to see many instances where new school administrators have been able to turn around severely dysfunctional schools. These talented educators have utilized a variety of different concepts, but one common thread throughout each case has been a pervasive focus on active and thoughtful student supervision. This issue of *School Safety Monthly* is designed to help you evaluate your school organization's student supervision practices and priorities. As you read this issue, I challenge you to ask yourself this question: Is there more that I could be doing to improve this fundamental aspect of education? - Michael Dorn

## School Safety Tools Highlight

### Ask Safe Havens

"Ask Safe Havens" is a free online video series produced by the Safe Havens Video team. In each episode we answer questions about school safety topics such as crisis response, student supervision and school security equipment. The videos are available through our website and on Youtube and Vimeo.

Visit [Ask Safe Havens here](#) to watch our Student Supervision video.



[Vimeo.com/safehavensintl/](https://vimeo.com/safehavensintl/)  
[Youtube.com/SafeHavensIntl](https://youtube.com/SafeHavensIntl)



# Benefits of Improved Student Supervision

by Michael Dorn

Improved student supervision can have many benefits other than a basic improvement in control over your campus. In particular, there has been considerable concern and controversy about the “school to prison pipeline” theory. According to this theory, inappropriate arrests of students for minor on-campus crimes results in increased drop-out and expulsion rates, which later manifests as higher incarceration rates. As a result, many school systems have worked diligently to minimize student prosecutions.

This approach, when not done in a thoughtful manner, can quickly result in other negative consequences, including dramatic increases in fights and other problem behaviors. According to Pepperdine Law Professor Dr. Bernie James, there have now also been at least eight successful civil actions against K12 school districts which have attempted to defend their decisions not to prosecute student violators when it would have been appropriate.

## **Appropriately reducing the numbers of students entering the criminal justice system**

In my experience, improvements in student supervision can help to reduce the number of prosecutions of students without the potential for such negative consequences. Regardless of their position on the validity of the prison to pipeline theory, both proponents and those who oppose this approach desire positive outcomes for students. People who have expressed passionate viewpoints on both sides



**Photo: Rachel Wilson**



of this discussion have told me that they agree that preventing these types of incidents is better than reacting to them after they have taken place.

For example, the Clark County, Nevada Public School District has been able to reduce expulsions and long-term suspensions by as much as 50% by combining improved student supervision with improved feedback from students. To accomplish this, district staff integrate student survey results and incident data into GIS mapping studies to determine when and where negative behaviors are taking place. Student supervision is thoughtfully improved in hot spots, which helps to prevent future incidents. Rather than focusing

on how to react to minor criminal behaviors such as fighting on campus, this approach emphasizes prevention of the criminal violations in the first place.

### **Reducing Exposure to Civil Liability through Effective Student Supervision**

Either as a positive or a negative factor, student supervision has been a relevant topic in most of the cases where I have served as an expert witness. In a number of instances, ineffective student supervision has contributed to tragic incidents resulting in death and permanent disabilities. In other cases, school officials have been able to demonstrate that proper student supervision was in place to successfully defend against

a civil action even though a safety incident had taken place. While improvements in school safety are the most compelling reason to emphasize effective student supervision, the added benefits of reduced liability exposure provide another compelling argument to make this important strategy a focal point.

Fortunately, many enhancements in student supervision can be achieved with little and even no impact on budget. Improving student supervision can be a powerful tool to improve safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness. The summer break is an excellent time to plan ways to enhance student supervision for the next school year. - *Michael Dorn*



**Photo: Rachel Wilson**



# Is student supervision included in your school safety assessment process?

by Michael Dorn

Safe Havens Analysts are trained to evaluate student supervision using our online school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness assessment web app. This tool includes a variety of specific aspects of student supervision. Our analysts pay particular attention to student supervision efforts at a number of specific times of day and during different campus activities including:

- During student arrival and departure, paying particular attention to the potential for pedestrian/vehicle conflict
- Indoors, during student arrival, dismissal, passing periods and lunch
- During outdoor activities
- During physical education activities
- In media centers and other large areas that are often difficult to supervise

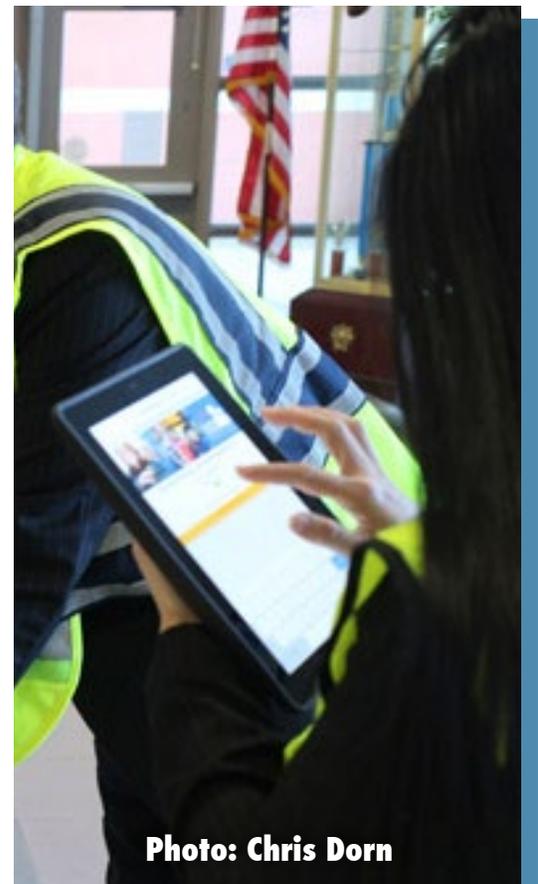
Our analysts also are instructed to pay particular attention for potentially dangerous practices. Some of the most common are students being allowed to wander hallways during instructional times and allowing unlocked, unsupervised space to exist within the school. Many staff do not realize that leaving areas such as gymnasiums, storage closets and



**Photo: Rachel Wilson**

boiler rooms unsecured when an adult is not present can lead to theft of items, violent attacks, bullying and rape. Spot-checks of these areas should be performed on a regular basis as staff move throughout the school as well as during formal safety and security assessments.

If your current school safety assessment process does not include formal evaluation of student supervision, this is one simple and free technique that can improve the effectiveness of your evaluation. By adding the concepts from this article to your process you can increase the effectiveness of your evaluation by identifying symptoms that often signal larger issues.



**Photo: Chris Dorn**



## Safe Havens Training Opportunities: Summer & Fall 2015

- August 12th, 2015: Michael Dorn, North Laurens Community Schools - Indiana
- August 17th-18th, 2015: Michael Dorn, Jersey CUSD No 100 Schools in Jerseyville, Illinois
- August 18th, 2015: Chris Dorn will be presenting the first of two upcoming webinars for Progressive Business Executive Education. The first session is a one-hour session titled “Active Shooters & School Lockdowns: How to Act Fast & Survive an Attack” - the second will be a two-hour webinar on Crisis Decision-Making Under Stress that will take place in September. To register for the one-hour webinar visit <http://goo.gl/aJawMf>
- August 28th, 2015: Michael Dorn will serve as a keynote speaker for the FBI National Academy Associates Rocky Mountain Chapter Annual Conference. For information on attending the conference, visit: <http://goo.gl/Dbx2LR>
- September 23rd-24th, 2015: Michael Dorn will present at the Best Practices and Innovations Conference for CTE Leaders in Phoenix, Arizona

### *Indiana School Safety Specialists Academy (ISSSA) events:*

- September 30th, 2015: Michael Dorn will present at the ISSSA Advanced Session in Indianapolis Indiana.
  - November 17th, 2015: Michael Dorn will keynote the ISSSA Basic Academy.
- Out of state attendees are welcome to attend on a limited basis. For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/zo6nTU>

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## School Safety Monthly

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