



*S*chool Safety Monthly

November 2016

School Safety, Post-Election



Photos: Rachel Wilson



Message from the Editor

trusted adults, like it or not. We set the example for our students and we are also one of their best resources for help.

It is important that we act with the super-ego portion of our brain and not the id. When we react with our id we do not consider the long-term effects of our actions but are acting on immediate emotions. When we have the capacity to listen to our super-ego, we go beyond the scope of our personal world view and consider the perspectives of others and the potential effect on the community overall. We also often find that we are not so different after all.

To this end, we have packed this issue with ideas for responding to the difficult situation that many of our schools are now facing. As always, we welcome your feedback.

-Rachel



Citizens of culturally divided Barcelona, Spain perform the "Sardana" in public squares each Sunday as an act of unity. Photo by Rachel Wilson

The last few weeks have been a difficult time for our country. It is important to remember that each of us - no matter what our race, religion or beliefs - will at some point be the victim of discrimination. That is a fact of life. The deciding factor is how we deal with it as victims, as bystanders and as allies. We must remember that each of us are role models, mentors and

New Resource: Children's book series about police, lockdowns and safety, written by a School Resource Officer!

Deputy Becky Coyle is a School Resource Officer who has put together some beautifully illustrated children's books to help teach young students about issues like police in schools, access control and lockdowns in a friendly voice. We were honored to be able to review these books and are impressed by Deputy Coyle's dedication to her calling. These books would make a great addition to your set of tools for educating young children about difficult topics. Deputy Coyle is also the author of "[Behind the Blue Line](#)" - a collection of inspirational stories from her law enforcement career.



Photo: Rachel Wilson
Safe Havens International

Click the links below to find the books on Amazon - or better yet - ask for them at your local bookstore!

["Police In Our School"](#)



["Who Let the Dog in?"](#)



["The Lockdown Drill"](#)





Stand Up Against Hate

by Dr. Chantrise Sims Holliman
and Dr. Sonayia Shepherd

In recent days, reports of hate speech, bullying and harassment appear to be rising to concerning levels.

As of this writing, the Southern Poverty Law Center (www.splcenter.org) had received **867** reports of hate incidents in the 10 days after the presidential election. In addition, a survey conducted of **10,000** school staff had some alarming results:

- **90%** reported a negative impact on student mood and behavior since the election
- **80%** reported heightened anxiety in marginalized students (immigrants, Muslims, African Americans, LGBT, etc.)
- **40%** reported hearing slurs based on race, religion or gender
- **50%** of teachers are hesitant to discuss the election in class

Source: [Southern Poverty Law Center, Election Impact Study](#)

Educators are tasked to ensure that all students not only learn but are educated in an environment that is conducive to that learning. This means creating a space for creativity, critical thinking, and risk taking; a space where opinions are varied but respect is consistent; a space where students are safe to be who they are without condemnation and know that they are loved and well-held. But what happens when hate is supported and spread throughout the nation to the point where it eventually touches the classroom? Data analysis tells us that the likely effects are increases in acts of bullying suicide rates.

According to bullyingstatistics.org, "Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people,

resulting in about **4,400** deaths per year, according to the CDC. For every suicide among young people, there are at least 100 suicide attempts. Over **14 percent** of high school students have considered suicide, and almost **7 percent** have attempted it."

Unfortunately, this number is expected to rise based on what we have seen pre- and post-election. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline reported an increased call volume of **660** calls between 1AM and 2AM on November 9, 2016. According to the organization's Director, the volume was two to three times normal. The Crisis Text Line also saw a surge, when most texters who identified as Muslim shared fears about how they will be treated. In a press release, Director Eddy said that "election" and "scared" were the top two words mentioned by texters in the 24 hours after the election and the phrased most commonly associated with "scared" was "LGBTQ."

So, what should happen when bullying occurs?

There are resources that students, parents and teachers can utilize if faced with bullying, harassment, and/or intimidation. These incidents tend to be exhibited from students toward other students. If you are a student being bullied

- Find an adult you can trust, whether that be another teacher, an administrator, or any other adult in the building or in your community and tell them what happened.
- Tell your parents or caregivers immediately and let them handle it from there.

- If you are able to sign out from school, and you don't feel comfortable staying, go home. You shouldn't have to stay in any space where you feel threatened or unsafe.

- Don't try to retaliate. That's never a wise choice and being punished because of it does not help the situation.

If you are a student and see a fellow student being bullied...

- Reassure them that you witnessed what happened and will stand by them if necessary.
- Tell an adult you can trust what happened and ask them to intervene.
- Stay with that person as much as possible throughout the day. Just knowing that someone who cares is close by be helpful.

Another alarming facet of this issue is the appearance of media reports that staff are – intentionally or not – joining in the bullying and harassment of marginalized students. So what should you do when this same behavior comes from educators?

If you are a parent of a child being bullied by a teacher:

- Listen to the child when they tell you what happened and don't just dismiss the concern. Yes, sometimes students can exaggerate an encounter with a teacher, but listen to what they say and look for patterns if concerns are frequent.

(continued on next page)



Hate Speech & Bullying (Continued)

by Dr. Chantrise Sims Holliman and Dr. Sonayia Shepherd

- Have your student document each incident with the day, date, and time if possible. If your student is too young, listen carefully to what they say and document them yourself.
- If the situation isn't too grievous, meet with the teacher and explain your concerns. Perhaps it was either a misunderstanding or it was an unintended offense.
- If the situation isn't resolved with the teacher, follow the chain of command before contacting the principal. In most schools, that means contacting the teacher's department or content chair or lead, the department or content administrator, and then finally the principal. If none of these avenues work, contacting the superintendent or someone in the district or county office can be used as a last resort.
- Reassure your child that you support them and will move heaven and earth to make sure the situation comes to a positive resolution.
- Do not threaten the teacher, either in person or in writing. As with students, this will not end well for you and will only aggravate the situation further.



If you are a teacher and you see a colleague bullying a student...

- The first thing you have to do – after stopping the behavior – is document, document, document.
- Write down the date, the time, and exactly what happened and remember to be as reasonable and objective as possible.
- Follow the reporting chain of command.

It is equally important to understand that there are a host of organizations that are dedicated to providing safe learning environments for everyone, and while there are a few horrific isolated incidents of bullying and harassment from those who chose ignorance, there are far more people out there who have offered to support victims.

Here are a few organizations that have resources dedicated to addressing hate-based issues. This list is not exhaustive but it is a great place to start.

Stop Bullying Now
<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>
 The United States Department of Education's Anti-Bullying Program.

Southern Poverty Law Center
<http://splcenter.org>
 An organization dedicated to monitoring and fighting hate groups and promoting tolerance.

National Association of School Psychologists
<https://www.nasponline.org>
 A leading professional organization with resources for supporting students in stressful times.

Charity Navigator
<http://www.charitynavigator.org>
 America's largest independent charity evaluator, if you would like to find an organization to donate or volunteer your time with and help students directly.



Dr. Shepherd is a Senior Analyst with Safe Havens International, author of 16 books on school safety and a regularly requested speaker and trainer at national conferences. Dr. Chantrise Sims Holliman is a seasoned educator who has spent 12 years working with secondary students, and those who teach them, to ensure all receive the type of education they need to be successful both inside and outside of the classroom.



No Place for Hate - 20 Steps to help Adress Hate in Schools

by Michael S Dorn

Media reports relating to post-election acts of intolerance and hate indicate a disturbing trend. Reports of students being attacked verbally and physically because of their real or perceived ethnicity, religion, disability, immigration status, sexual preference or support for political viewpoints are particularly upsetting. There are many clear indications that a significant number of students now fear that they may be attacked because of their real or perceived ethnicity, sexual preference, immigration status, transgender status or political views. How can educators address the concerns of the potential for these types of troubling incidents and those that are reported to have taken place on their campuses?

10 Key Points for Educators

Here are a few important considerations for school leaders regarding threats, degrading behaviors and physical attacks on campus:

1. K12 schools have a significant obligation to assertively and promptly investigate and address harassment relating to race, religion, disability, sexual preference and gender. Currently, this is supported by the Department of Justice's "Dear Colleague" letter regarding harassment due to sexual preference and transgender status. While there are some indications that this letter may be modified or replaced in the future, schools still have a serious obligation to properly address these types of incidents. School districts have paid hundreds of millions of dollars in legal fees, fines, out of court settlements and jury awards since Title VI and Title IX were enacted. Even if these statutes, or interpretations of these statutes,



change in the future, individual school organizations can still opt to set and enforce these types of standards unless prohibited by law.

2. Schools can and are often successfully litigated because of verbal and physical assaults regardless of the motivation of the attackers - when they could not demonstrate that reasonable efforts were in place at the time of the assault. Multi-million dollar settlements and jury awards have taken place in cases where no form of discrimination was demonstrated or even alleged.

3. Schools that do not take reasonable steps to address forms of harassment will probably see increased levels of fear, anxiety and violence, as well as significant impact on test scores.

4. Poor handling of reports relating to these types of activities can result in a significant loss of public support. This can result in failed bond referendums, protests against school board members and a host of other destructive outcomes.

5. Schools that do not exhibit a demonstrably fair, thorough and assertive investigation of reported harassment can be the next

day's top story in the national news. Any school superintendent who has lived through a week of aggressive news reporting can attest that these situations can be quite toxic in many ways. This is even more true in the era of social media.

6. Now is an excellent time to review your policies relating to harassment, intimidation and bullying. If your policies do not reflect the types of issues that are of heightened concern to your personnel, students, staff and parents, consider updating them with assistance from legal counsel.

7. This is also an excellent opportunity to review your policies on free speech, protests and civil unrest. If you do not feel that your policies will allow you to properly address these types of activities, you may wish to upgrade these policies with assistance from legal counsel.

8. Carefully evaluate how well your staff are able to interpret and apply your organization's policies, practices and procedures, especially when staff feel considerable pressure to act promptly to address these serious types of concerns quickly and while under stress. Consider whether you are properly documenting training activities so you can prove that a reasonable effort was made to train your personnel in these key areas. Staff development options include live training, web-based training or a combination of both approaches. One approach that can be invaluable here is role-playing various situations and staff responses to practice for real events, either in single-scenario or tabletop format.



9. Reevaluate your lines of communication among staff and between students, staff and parents. Improved communications can help demonstrate to potential victims and to potential aggressors that the school will respond assertively to hate speech or other intolerant behaviors.

10. Evaluate your policies on internet-related behaviors of staff and students. If you do not feel they are adequate to address the types of situations that are occurring in your schools, consider upgrading and clearly communicating any enhancements to students, staff and parents.

10 Steps for Responding

The following are tips for students, parents and staff coping with high levels of anxiety relating to their safety as well as positive steps that can be taken when actual threats, degrading behaviors and physical attacks are reported:

1. Clearly advise students and parents that students who are victimized by others have a variety of options to receive support from the school and local law enforcement officers. Many of the types of hate activities students fear are covered by criminal statutes as well as by school policies. Clear notification of these options can help to deter those who might otherwise engage in hate activities and can help empower potential victims.

2. Create, maintain, advertise and promptly respond to reports from anonymous reporting systems like tip lines or comment boxes.

3. Clearly communicate the stance of school officials as being one of promptly and thoroughly investigating complaints. Demonstrate that this is a priority by following through if and when complaints

are received.

4. Conduct prompt but thorough investigations of reports of harassment, following appropriate procedures when the case involves a person in a legally protected status under state and/or federal law.

5. Be sure to involve law enforcement for any complaints that involve violation of criminal law or local statutes. Discouraging victims from exercising their right to file criminal charges can create significant risk exposure for school officials and can result in assaults on victims. A number of schools have been successfully litigated for their failure to have students arrested, suspended or expelled for violence or threats of violence.

6. If you do not already do so, consider utilizing anonymous survey instruments that include school climate questions and questions relating to bullying and harassment. This can not only make it easier for students to express concerns, but can also help you evaluate and demonstrate the actual levels of bullying and harassment. This can be invaluable in case false allegations are made against your school.

7. Consider temporarily adding additional school monitors, security officers and law enforcement officers if you see indications of heightened tension in your school or schools.

8. Focus intently on improving student supervision. This can increase the chances that staff will be on hand to interrupt inappropriate conduct before it escalates.

9. Urge students and staff to bring any concerns relating to harassment, intimidation and bullying to the attention of a staff member.



Take steps to clarify staff responsibilities once a report is received. Be sure to follow your policies on the investigation of harassment, intimidation and bullying.

10. Walk the walk. Work to see that the written policies and procedures in place are being implemented in actual practice. Otherwise you are creating even more liability - and risk - for your organization and those it serves.

*Michael Dorn has experienced first-hand being threatened with a knife because of his race at school. Now serving as the Executive Director of Safe Havens International, Michael is working on his 28th book, *Extreme Violence – Preventing and Preparing for Active Shooter, Active Killer and Acts of Terrorism*. Michael welcomes reader feedback at our website - www.SafeHavensInternational.org*



Photo of the Month

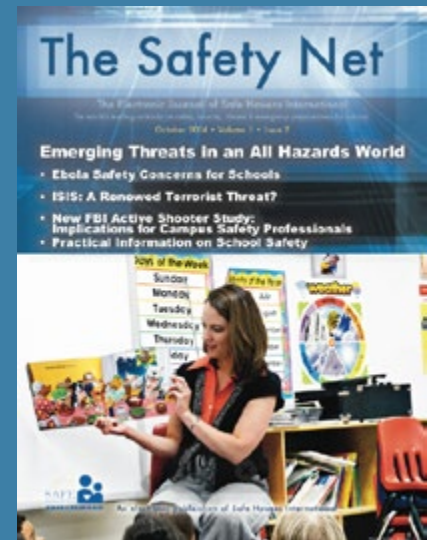


A critical component of any safe school is positive building body language. This is an excellent example of creating a positive environment while making immigrant and exchange students feel more welcome and a part of the school.

Chris Dorn/Safe Havens International

Subscribe to *School Safety Monthly* and *The Safety Net*

In addition to School Safety Monthly, Safe Havens International also publishes an annual electronic journal titled The Safety Net. This is a more in-depth publication that allows for a longer format of articles and a detailed look at topics related to school safety, school security, emergency preparedness for schools, safe school design, building climate, safe school culture and school law enforcement concepts. If you are on the mailing list for School Safety Monthly you will also receive new issues of The Safety Net. If you are not already a subscriber, click here to sign up: <http://www.safehavensinternational.org/newsletter>



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