



# Safe Schools Agenda

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**Route to:**  
\_ Superintendent  
\_ School Business Off.  
\_ Athletic Director  
\_ Supt. Bldgs/Grounds  
\_ Site Administrators  
\_ Transportation Dir.  
\_ Lunch Director  
\_ Classroom Teachers  
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*A monthly service provided to help you with your efforts to make your school safe for students, staff and the public*

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## The Courts are Getting More Bullying Cases

Parents are turning to the courts in increasing numbers to obtain satisfaction for the failure of schools to stop bullying. The landmark case in the current trend occurred in 1996 when the federal trial *Nabozny vs. Podlesny* found the school district guilty of failing to protect a gay student – to the tune of \$900,000.

Three lawsuits this year continue the pattern. The Anchorage, Alaska district was charged with knowing about but ignoring unrelenting harassment of a 14 year old who attempted suicide, resulting in permanent brain damage.

Eugene, Oregon paid \$10,000 to a boy who was bullied and later attacked on a school bus.

An Albany, New York school district has been sued by the parents of a black student who allegedly threw the first punch in a fight with a white student. He was suspended for five weeks. The suit claims that the district did nothing during the three years of racial slurs and bullying he suffered from the victim of the fight. The NAACP is supporting the suit and has called for the state to investigate the suspension rates and punishment lengths of black students in the district compared to white students.

Ironically, the district, which has a tradition of developing programs for disadvantaged students, embarked on an extensive bullying prevention training program last year.

The common thread in these cases is the allegation that administrators failed to respond to complaints of bullying. When the courts find in favor of the student, the costs in dollars and public image for the district are substantial. Clearly, administrators need to be very proactive in following up on complaints of bullying as well as running bullying prevention programs.

Suggestions for this summer's administrative retreat:

1. Before school ends, conduct a survey of student and faculty perceptions of safety, with special emphasis on bullying.
2. Gather the data on student disciplinary actions.
3. Conduct an evaluation of the anti-bullying program(s) already in place.
4. Analyze the findings, looking for patterns and for inconsistencies between the three sets of data.
5. Look at successful programs for techniques to strengthen your program.
6. Brainstorm ways to strengthen your responses – and your documentation.
7. Develop a plan and assign responsibilities for implementation.

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## Common Accident Causes

We tend to emphasize unsafe conditions as the unnecessary cause of accidents, and it is true in many cases. In reality, though, **unsafe acts cause four times as many accidents and injuries as unsafe conditions.** Attitudes and behaviors are more likely to be the “root cause” of an accident. Dealing with them is more difficult than dealing with physical conditions, but well worth the effort.

Some behaviors and attitudes that can result in injury:

- **Taking shortcuts:** poorly considered decisions to make the job faster or more efficient, but at the risk of injury.
- **Overconfidence:** or, “it will never happen to me”. Such an attitude can lead to improper procedures, use of tools or methods.
- **Inadequate knowledge of the job to be performed:** starting a task without getting a full explanation of work procedures and safety hazards.
- **Poor housekeeping:** housekeeping on the job is a clear reflection of attitudes toward quality, production and safety. It creates a myriad of safety hazards.
- **Ignoring safety procedures:** dismissing safety procedures endangers everyone on the job.
- **Mental distractions from work:** losing focus on the job at hand because of personal problems or conversations with fellow employees is an invitation to disaster.
- **Failure to plan the work:** being hasty in starting a task, or not thinking through the process.

## Shop Safety Checklist

Use this checklist as a starter in conducting an audit of conditions and procedures in your maintenance and transportation shops.

1. Are unapproved - or untrained – people allowed to use shop equipment?
2. Is the shop secured when no one is present?
3. Are machines in operation ever left unattended?
4. Are emergency equipment such as first aid kits, emergency lighting, fire extinguishers and eye wash stations present, in good order and checked monthly?
5. Is there a formal process for periodically checking all personal protective equipment, hand tools, portable power tools and other equipment for wear and damage?
6. Check to make sure that all cleaning baths and parts washers are safe to use? Check area lighting, ventilation and fusible links on the self-closing covers.
7. Are spills cleaned up immediately?
8. Are walkways and stairs free of tripping hazards?
9. Are oily rags stored in a covered metal container and emptied nightly?
10. Are all tools kept in their place and red-tagged when in need of repair?
11. Is the lockout-tag procedure in place, understood and practiced?

*“It is better to be careful 100 times than to get killed once.” (Mark Twain)*