

**Policy Brief**

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One of the agenda items mentioned during the meeting was school safety and regarding the lockdown procedures. They stated they were changing the lockdown procedures due to an accident that had happened previously in the year. They do currently have a crisis plan but do not share with the public on that plan for the safety of the faculty and students. They decided to revise this plan by adding another policy for emergency situations. They had decided when there is an emergency the principal of the school is supposed to immediately let the superintendent know. They are supposed to let a high command chain of officers aware of what is happening even during a shooting or lockdown. Training for teachers on the crisis plan was also discussed.

For the purpose of this policy brief I am going to focus on school shootings and lockdown procedures. First, I am going to focus on the reasons behind school shootings. Most of the time school shootings are a variable of school bullying. Those who go through school shootings are those who have been a victim of bullying. In one article it states about 70% of middle school and high school students have experienced bullying at some point in their education. In the article it talks about how some school shootings but not all are a variable of bullying. They want to get revenge on those who had bullied them from the past and decide to go through a school shooting (Langman , 2014).

Just in 2022 there were 51 school shootings resulting in 140 people killed (*School shootings in 2022: How many and where* 2023). Since the Columbine shooting in 199 there have been 366 school shootings (John Woodrow Cox, 2023). Over 338,000 children have experienced gun violence at school since then (John Woodrow Cox, 2023). Just this year there have been seven school shootings and since 2018 there have been 151.

Bullying has many different effects. These can range from depression and anxiety to decrease in academic achievement (Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA), 2021). Some victims are even diagnosed with a psychiatric illness after being bullied (Vanderbilt, 2010). Bullying can make the victim feel lonely, confused, and distraught in many ways. Due to this many act out after being bullied due to them not knowing how to handle their emotions. This can be violent or nonviolent. Bullying causes many things that sometimes are irreversible. Its no secret that there is bullying in schools but why hasn't more been done to fix it?

Another reason behind school shootings is how easy access to guns people have. The US has the easiest access to guns in the world. About 4.6 million children live in a house where a gun is available to them. If a child is told to not do something more than likely they will strive to do such a thing. Tell a child to not play with a gun they will think about that gun and the fact that they shouldn't touch the gun but want to. 68% of gun related incidents were used by guns taken from the home itself (*17 facts about gun violence and school shootings 2023*).

There are several different lockdown procedures when it comes to lockdowns. You have a soft lockdown which is where everyone is told to stay out of hallways and stay inside classrooms unless an emergency occurs inside the classroom. This is where it is allowed to still move inside the school but it is where everyone is told to stay inside the school and not to venture outside of the school. Then there is the hard lockdown. This is where you are to stay put inside the classroom and you are locked inside. This lockdown procedure is for the more dangerous emergencies were to happen, like threats towards the school, potential shooter, and many others like this. You also have the shelter in place lockdown, internal threat, and external threat. Lockdowns are to practice to ensure childrens, faculty, and staffs safety when there is an threat to their safety.

Some critique on the policies they mentioned about lockdown procedures is the fact that whenever there is an emergency the principal has to notify the superintendent. I think this can be cause for concern because if someone comes in shooting or there is an outside threat the first thing the principal should not be worried about is notifying someone else of the issue, it should be making sure the threat is taken care of and all faculty, staff, and students are safe. I feel as if there is a situation like that, the main concern should be that not notifying someone, this gives more time for the situation to get worse. If there is a shooter in the building most schools but not all have a button you can push to notify the authorities that there is a threat in the school. At this time the authorities can then notify the superintendent for you. Or another way they can be notified is when the person is sure there is a threat they can make a quick call to the superintendent and say “code black or etc” for whichever code it is for that emergency. That way its a quicker way to communicate what is going on and doesn't take away the time needed for that emergency.

Another critique is about the lockdown procedure. From what I remember in school lockdown procedures were not practice enough throughout highschool. I also believe they need to practice more real life scenarios to make the children prepared for what could happen today, especially in today's society. In some schools they have practice school shootings where people come in and plan out a school shooting. This is all fake but it prepares the children on what to do in a real life scenario. Even though the children know it's fake it does help them realize how serious these events can get. I also remember in school no one took practice lockdowns seriously. I feel like a discipline act should be taken towards the actions to prevent children rom doing this. Sometimes you aren't aware of when a lockdown is practice or not and if you have children goofing off during them then they could be putting their peers in danger. A policy that states

once a month there is a real lockdown procedure will help make sure everyone involved is well prepared for if this would ever happen.

ANother policy I think schools should have is metal detectors and stronger security to get into buildings. Although this is harsh I think it could potentially help with weapons being brought into the schools. When I went to school, especially high school the doors never locked. People from the outside could easily get into our schools if they wanted to. I think all doors should be locked with a card reader access. Each student and faculty member will be given a card that allows them access into the building. At each door there will be a metal detector that will send a signal to a resource officer or the front desk if metal is detected on that person. This will then allow the resources officers to track down that person and figure out what made the detectors go off. Although this plan does have some variables to work out, I believe it is a good start.

Overall the school board is trying to provide a safer environment for children to get their education without the worry about their safety. Although I think their new policy needs some work, I know they are trying their best to keep children safe. I think bullying is a key variable as to why these shootings are occurring and by stopping that and handling the issues with better protocols I feel as if maybe there will be less school shootings. Also with more safety policies and overall policies we can take better care of the children at school and provide better safety.

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