# SAFE, HEALTHY AND POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN FOR SCHOOLS

## KEY POINTS ON SCHOOL SECURITY 2018

1. **Ask:** What are the top ten issues at your school? What interventions have you used? What worked and what didn't? Ask *before* imposing solutions from on high. What are the top three causes of student injury, illness or death at or near each school? Examples might include asthma, allergies, car crashes, diabetes, obesity, malnutrition, depression, suicide, mental illness, child abuse, domestic violence, the flu, bullying, harassment or sexual assault. Ask school administrators, teachers and students for their priorities. Ask other schools nationwide about their successes and failures addressing those issues.
2. **Resist simplistic solutions.** Solutions that can fit in a nutshell generally belong there. Schools are complicated environments, with lots of facets to take into account. A cookie cutter solution is rarely the best approach. Politics and social media lend themselves to quick sound bites that sound like solutions, but they do a disservice to all involved.
3. **Nurture communication channels.** Make it as easy as possible to gather early warning information and provide positive intervention. Establish multiple avenues for communication, but have an easy means of sharing that information amongst key staff. Who can students talk to, who do they trust (ask them), and how can you reinforce that? Who are the most troubled, alienated or lost kids at school? What more could be done to serve them?
4. **Empower your schools.** Give them menus, not pre-determined meals. The more they own solutions, the more likely they are to use them. The alternative is that they end up circumventing inconvenient or impractical solutions (such as by propping open doors).
5. **Apply site-specific CPTED basics.** (See: NCEF )
6. **Electronics** – *Don't* start with a solution looking for a problem; start with step one above.) If someone proposes a technology, walk it through specific scenarios. Would it have made a difference addressing the specific problem you're trying to solve? Is it the best approach? Maintain a cost/benefit spreadsheet, including maintenance costs, and check references.
7. **Get real.** What degree of vigilance is realistic? You can't stay on red alert 24/7. That's the definition of PTSD. In the weeks or months after a major incident, hypervigilance and traumatic stress are common, but eventually staff ease off of red alert, or they may have other duties to attend to (like teaching). Kids open side doors when almost anyone knocks. You're better off acknowledging reality and working with it then pretending people will follow mandates.
8. **Think about rush hours** – In most schools I've visited rush hours between classes are pretty chaotic. Early arrival, and after-school events, can be pretty lax in terms of security. Alternatives are extra vigilance at those times, or staggered schedules to reduce the load. Most shooters slip in with weapons during those easy times, knowing there's only so much you can realistically do to spot them.

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