

# Nevada – School Boards

School Safety

Making A Difference.....Starting With You!

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# Newtown Lessons Learned

Presented by **Dr. Joseph Erardi**  
Retired Superintendent (Newtown, CT)



*Lessons Learned.....Meaningful, Reasonable, Sustainable*

- ◆ KEYS AND DOORS
- ◆ DRILLS
- ◆ ROSTER AND OPEN CAMPUS
- ◆ REUNIFICATION
- ◆ INCIDENT COMMAND CENTER
- ◆ IN THE MOMENT – COMMON SENSE
- ◆ MINIMIZE THE HUMAN ELEMENT
- ◆ EQUITY IN UNDERSTANDING THE PLAN
- ◆ POST TRAGEDY COMMUNICATION



**Measuring the Fidelity of Your Plan  
Student Voice**



- ◆ Do you now feel more safe or less safe at school than you did when you first entered Newtown High School?
  - ◆ 83% More Safe – 8% Less Safe – 9% Same
- ◆ Do you normally see school security officers in the building and on campus on days when school is in session?
  - ◆ 99.66% Yes - .33% No
- ◆ What role(s) do you see the school security officers performing throughout the day?
  - ◆ 62% Access Management – 46% Patrolling Building – 17% Checking Vehicles at Gate
- ◆ What changes in security should be considered to help students feel safer in school?
  - ◆ 19% of Respondents left suggested changes for consideration to security. Only 5% of those responses indicated a desire to reduce security levels. – 26% Security Convocations – 19% Arm the Guards – 14% More Guards

## Consistency: Emergency Response Team

- ◆ Empowering Faculty
- ◆ Voluntary
- ◆ Strong leadership
- ◆ Dedicated
- ◆ Strategically located throughout the building

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## Board of Education Responsibilities

Foster a district culture that makes student success and well-being a priority

1. Develop and maintain policy and procedure for the district based on local need and statutory requirements
2. Adopt, advocate for and oversee the district budget
3. Support and work effectively with the Superintendent
4. Communicate with other elected officials and community members

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## 2. District Budget

- ◆ Gap analysis and security checklist helps to prioritize
- ◆ Funding possibilities:
  - ◆ school funding
  - ◆ grants
  - ◆ partnerships with outside organizations

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## 3. Support the Superintendent

- Board Meetings
- Superintendent communication with parents during “events”
  - Effect of social media on incident response
  - The need for clear and timely messaging

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***BEFORE.....***

WHAT I NEED TO KNOW AND DO AS THE DISTRICT'S  
SUPERINTENDENT

- ◆ Have I cultivated a strong relationship built on mutual respect with the local safety officials (police chief) and do we meet regularly to discuss safety?
- ◆ Do I have in place a detailed safety and security plan that is easily understood by all stakeholders?
- ◆ Do I have in place an identified staff member or a technology platform which will broadcast all needed information to the school community and the community-at-large pertaining to a crisis?

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***BEFORE.....***

WHAT I NEED TO KNOW AND DO AS THE DISTRICT'S  
SUPERINTENDENT

- ◆ Do I attend district safety committee meetings to show my unyielding support for the work?
- ◆ Am I comfortable with the safety and security plan if my district was in a crisis?
- ◆ Can I assure the local school board that every staff member (including new staff) understands our safety plan before they are with children?

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## ***BEFORE.....***

### WHAT I NEED TO KNOW AND DO AS THE DISTRICT'S SUPERINTENDENT

- ◆ If I was out-of-district during a school emergency have I mentored or met with the key staff member who would represent my work in the midst of a tragedy?
- ◆ As needed, do I meet with my school board (minimum three times per year) in executive session to address school safety and security?
- ◆ Have I examined existing resources to reallocate assignments to meet the needs of today's safety and security most complex issues?
- ◆ Do I meet with district mental health providers to collaborate and to have strategies in place for our most complex students who bring with them safety concerns to the district?

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## ***DURING.....***

### WHAT I NEED TO KNOW AND DO IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS

- ◆ Proximity - Where is the best place for me to be to lead?
- ◆ Messaging – Can I use my already prepared messages from our district's messaging bank to be proactive with communication?
- ◆ Empowerment – Have I scanned the crisis for gaps in our plan, and if need be, fill those gaps with staff members embedded within my trust circle?
- ◆ Composure – Do I have the ability to remain composed or do I delegate the point person to a designee?

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***DURING.....*****WHAT I NEED TO KNOW AND DO IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS**

- ◆ Duration – Am I able to stay at point for the duration of the crisis, and if not, how do I need to prepare and transition information to my designee?
- ◆ Reunification – Do all stakeholders have the same understanding for the parent reconnect? If I am not at the site have I designated a point person?
- ◆ Student and Staff Most Impacted by the Tragedy – Are my messages a balance of compassion and filled only with accurate information?

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***DURING.....*****WHAT I NEED TO KNOW AND DO IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS**

- ◆ School Board – Have I or my designee sent a message to the school board chair that there is a highly complex situation evolving in the district and information will be forthcoming as soon as the issue settles?
- ◆ Incident Command Center – Do I have all that I need from the ICC, and if not, how do I ascertain the information as quickly as possible?
- ◆ Personal – Have I kept my immediate family informed of the crisis and have I been able to honestly assure them of my own personal safety?

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***AFTER.....***

WHAT I NEED TO DO IN THE AFTERMATH OF A TRAGEDY

- ◆ Self-Regulating - If you are taking care of all who is taking care of you?
- ◆ Press Conference and Communication – Who should attend, and should there be a joint message from police and school?
- ◆ Families of Loss (If applicable) - Have I designated a point person to serve as a direct connect to the most impacted families and my office?
- ◆ Return to School – Have I consulted union presidents before finalizing my return-to-school broadcast?

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***AFTER.....***

WHAT I NEED TO DO IN THE AFTERMATH OF A TRAGEDY

- ◆ Debrief – Have I sat with all who were in the front line of the tragedy to better understand the “why” and to fully understand lessons learned?
- ◆ Support - Am I able to be present on site (out of my office) to appropriately support staff?
- ◆ Tragedy Roll-out - How do I (or do I) take full ownership to the issue?

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## ***AFTER.....***

### WHAT I NEED TO DO IN THE AFTERMATH OF A TRAGEDY

- ◆ Human Resource – Have I met with the Human Resource department to fully understand the appropriate message to all impacted staff pertaining to need and return-to-work?
- ◆ Daily District Ritual – As the superintendent I am spending nearly every minute of the work day navigating the tragedy; therefore, have I appropriately assigned and empowered a school leader to run the teaching and learning aspects of the school day?
- ◆ Sustainability and Recovery – Have I begun to think about who needs to be around the table when we address the inherent recovery and rebuild of the district?

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## ***LOW TO NO COST SOLUTIONS.....***

- ◆ Every door must lock from the inside.
- ◆ Every window must be numbered.
- ◆ Every staff member follows your lead with a high-yield no cost mentoring program.
- ◆ Every school building is intimately understood by at least one safety official.
- ◆ Every month you hold a meeting with the police chief.

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*LOW TO NO COST SOLUTIONS.....*

- ◆ Every administrator convenes their leadership team to work through a step back protocol as you become the listener: With existing resources what can we do differently to enhance safety and security?
- ◆ Every superintendent ensures their board that all staff understands the safety plan.
- ◆ Every superintendent runs meaningful drills not convenient drills.
- ◆ Every superintendent starts the new year with a detailed reunification plan?

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*LOW TO NO COST SOLUTIONS.....*

- ◆ Every superintendent completes a “gap analysis” of their district and requests appropriate funds.
- ◆ Every superintendent has at least three executive sessions planned for the new school year to discuss safety.
- ◆ Every superintendent carries on a “courageous conversation” with their community around safety.
- ◆ Every superintendent presents their security needs as a non-negotiable with elected officials.

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# QUESTIONS

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