

# NASB News Update--March 2018

## News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation



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### Supporting Success for All Students through Local School Board Leadership



### A Message from NASB's President



In the February issue of this newsletter, I explained NASB's focus on school safety in all of its forms. Although NASB has provided a number of workshops and/or presentations on school climate, environment, and safety, the Association and POOL/PACT will offer a workshop on April 20-21, focusing on these issues.

Although NASB began planning for this School Safety Workshop back in November, it is even more important today in the aftermath of the tragedy in Parkland, Florida. My thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the victims, their friends, and others in their communities who have been impacted by this tragedy. In addition, from the NASB perspective, our thoughts and our prayers are with the Florida School Boards Association as it helps a district and community heal after the tragedy in Broward County.

One of the takeaways for me after any school shooting is that addressing school safety doesn't simply mean responding to the latest horrific shooting. Districts have to put school shootings in perspective and understand where the threats are more likely to come from. Perhaps we need to place greater emphasis on an "all hazards" approach that considers the best responses to a variety of emergencies.

Working together, schools and community partners can focus their emergency planning using time-tested national guidance, including efforts to build school climate to establish relationships of trust and respect among students and staff in order to encourage them to share information about threatening behavior before an incident occurs. At the upcoming School Safety Workshop, we will focus on school climate and building a climate of trust that is conducive to information sharing.

Studies show that students who do not feel safe at school stay home. And when students aren't in school, they don't perform academically. In the long run, they miss opportunities that could bring them happiness and a stronger sense of self-worth.

Although we may think we have done enough, there is every chance that we have not. That's why POOL/PACT and NASB are providing assistance for school trustees to become more proactive and more effectively prepared for the unthinkable, no matter its form.

One of the ways that we deal with tragedy is through humor. That gets me to the next part of this month's Message. I want to share with you some little known facts about St. Patrick's Day. After all, only once while I serve as your President do I have this opportunity. These are my favorite facts.

- Most importantly, St. Patrick was not actually Irish, he was English, born about 386 A.D.
- His given name was Maewyn Succat.
- If he had not legally changed his name during his religious journeys, March 17 would be known as Maewyn Succat's Day.
- He was kidnapped at the age of sixteen and taken to Ireland as a slave.
- He tended sheep for ten years in Ireland before escaping to England and taking refuge in a monastery.
- During his years of captivity, he became deeply devoted to Christianity through constant prayer.
- He eventually became a priest and was soon sent by the Pope to Ireland where he spread the gospel to non-believers while also providing support to the small community of Christians already living in Ireland.
- After becoming a priest, he changed his name to Patricius, from the Latin meaning "father figure."
- And, the rest is history, although he never rid Ireland of snakes because post-glacial Ireland is one of the few countries on earth that never had any snakes.

I could go on, but that's probably enough.

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I strongly encourage you to plan ahead to attend the workshop on April 20-21 jointly organized by NASB and POOL/PACT. Because of the limitations of space, registration will be capped at 55 participants, so you will want to make your arrangements early.

Our students depend on us to keep them safe at school and to balance their physical security with a range of resources that we as school trustees oversee and monitor with the superintendent. Learning more about how to do this work more effectively is crucial for each of us.

Sincerely,

**Stacie Wilke-McCulloch**

NASB President



### Plan Ahead for NASB's 2018 Conference

November 16-17

Las Vegas—

South Point Casino Hotel & Spa



**School Trustee Orientation**

**November 15**



Friday, March 2, is "Read Across America Day."

*"You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child."*

School board members are encouraged to spend time during March in at least two classrooms reading aloud to Nevada's children.

## School Violence Prevention

All schools work to prevent school violence and schools are very safe places. Students, staff, and parents all have an important role in promoting school safety. Adults can provide leadership by reassuring students that schools are generally very safe places for children and youth and reiterating what safety measures and student supports are already in place in their schools. Adults can:

1. Create a safe, supportive school climate (e.g., school-wide behavioral expectations, caring school climate programs, positive interventions and supports, and psychological and counseling services).
2. Encourage students to take responsibility for their part in maintaining safe school environments, including student participation in safety planning.



**WELCOME**  
FOR THE SAFETY  
OF STUDENTS  
ALL VISITORS  
ARE TO SIGN IN  
AT THE OFFICE

3. Reiterate the school rules and request that students report potential problems to school officials.
4. Remind students of the importance of resisting peer pressure to act irresponsibly.
5. Create anonymous reporting systems (e.g., student hot lines, suggestion boxes, and "tell an adult" systems).
6. Control access to the school building (e.g., designated entrance with all other access points locked from the exterior).
7. Monitor school guests.
8. Monitor school parking lots and common areas, such as hallways, cafeterias, and playing fields.
9. Include the presence of school resource officers, security guards, or local police partnerships.

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10. Use security systems.
11. Develop crisis plans and provide preparedness training to all staff members.
12. Develop threat-assessment and risk-assessment procedures and teams for conducting the assessments.
13. Hold regular school-preparedness drills (e.g., intruder alerts, weather, fire, lockdown, evacuation).



14. Create school-community partnerships to enhance safety measures for students beyond school property.
15. Cite school safety incident data. Many school districts have local data that support a declining trend in school violence. When possible, citing local data helps families and students feel more at ease.
16. Be a visible, welcoming presence at school, greeting students and parents and visiting classrooms.
17. Conduct an annual review of all school safety policies and procedures to ensure that emerging school safety issues are adequately covered in current school crisis plans and emergency response procedures.
18. Review communication systems within the school district and with community responders. This should also address how and where parents will be informed in the event of an emergency.
19. Highlight violence prevention programs and curricula currently being taught in school. Emphasize the efforts of the school to teach students alternatives to violence including peaceful conflict resolution and positive interpersonal relationship skills.

#### [References:

- Brock, S.E., Nickerson, A.B., Reeves, M.A., Jimerson, S.R., Lieberman, R.A., & Feinberg, T.A. (2009). School crisis prevention and intervention: The PREPaRE model. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Cowan, K., and Paine, C., (2015). School safety: What really works. Principal Leadership, 13(7), 12. Retrieved from [http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/March\\_13\\_School\\_Safety](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/March_13_School_Safety). © 2015, National Association of School Psychologists, 4340 East West Highway, Suite 402, Bethesda, MD 20814; (301) 657-0270, Fax (301) 657-0275; [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)]

## From the NEA—School Safety: Responding to Hate and Bias at School

### Step One: Listen, Watch, and Learn

When you walk the halls or spend time in the cafeteria—wherever you are on a school campus—be alert. Are you hearing putdowns and slurs? Do you notice tense or fearful looks between some groups of students?

These are early warning signs of potential trouble. Unacknowledged and unchallenged, these attitudes and behaviors can set the stage for worse to come.

Safety, of course, is your first concern. Are direct threats being made? Is danger imminent? These situations may require immediate action. More general, indirect behaviors indicate that there might be a problem with the school climate. Is this the type of school you want?

Take notes. Identify patterns. Be the person who knows what's really going on at your schools.

One more thing: Make sure educational staff exercise the same vigilance in classrooms, playgrounds, the cafeteria, buses—everywhere. Being alert is the responsibility of everyone on campus, and everyone has a duty to report problems they see and hear. Make this an expectation and set up an efficient reporting system, like an anonymous complaint box or a designated staff member. After problems are reported, there must be clear signs of follow-up.

Here's a checklist to consider as you travel the halls, classrooms and school grounds:

#### **Casual pejoratives**

Do you hear certain words used regularly in a derogatory manner? That's so gay. That's lame. That's retarded. Is the word "bitch" used casually to label female students? Work to establish a climate where casual slurs are uncommon—and are challenged when they do occur. **Speak Up at School** offers advice on responding to everyday bias.

#### **School "pride"**

Do cheers and chants at sporting events focus on positive aspects of your school, or do they demean opponents instead? Chants or taunts based on ethnic stereotypes and socioeconomic differences have no place in an inclusive school community.

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### **Assemblies and holidays**

Skits and costumes can convey bigoted and stereotypical messages: the “day-laboring Mexican,” students dressed as “rednecks,” people in blackface. Pep rallies, Halloween and other events, like spirit days, can become steeped in stereotypes and bigotry. Set expectations beforehand about appropriate costumes and cultural sensitivity. Discuss the inappropriateness of caricatures or disturbing representations that are rooted in bias and bigotry.



### **Marginalized students**

Engage students who appear to be left out in the cafeteria, on the playground or in other school settings. Watch for patterns or changes in the way groups of students are aligned. Check for signs of hostility, depression or a marked change in behavior or academic performance, and reach out to the students' parents or guardians and/or the school counselor as appropriate. Alienated students—either as individuals or in groups—are more susceptible to bias-based bullying and even to recruitment by gangs and hate groups.

### **Student recognition**

How do your schools recognize student achievement? Long-standing traditions may contribute to a sense of entitlement among some students, and feelings of frustration or inadequacy in others. Who is spotlighted and who is ignored? Is there a perception—fair or not—that athletes, advanced placement (AP) students and student leaders enjoy privileges or are disciplined less severely for misconduct? Collaborate with students and faculty in developing more egalitarian ways to honor an array of student achievements.

### **Staff lounges**

How are teachers and other staff talking among themselves when outside of student hearing? Are teachers making negative comments about the “kids from the trailer park?” Are they telling casually bigoted jokes? Model inclusive, nonbigoted behavior yourself, and interrupt moments of bias among staff.

### **Your own perceptions**

Pay attention to the comments or complaints you automatically dismiss or discount. Is there a pattern? Is there a gap between your perception of a certain issue (bias-based bullying, for example) and the perception others have of the issue? Explore that with an open mind and a willingness to learn from others.

### **Involve everyone**

Every person in each school—from the music teacher who visits twice a week to the newest transfer student—should understand the climate of tolerance at your schools. “If you see something, say something” should be the model everyone uses. Let everyone know that incidents and concerns should be reported to school leaders in person or anonymously.

### **Don't forget the school bus**

Speak regularly with bus drivers about what they are seeing and hearing on the buses. Occasionally assign staff to ride buses (or ride the bus yourself ) to monitor behavior and to reinforce to students that the climate of tolerance includes not just the school grounds, but the bus as well.

## **Step Two: What Has Happened?**

*A Latino student and an Asian student have an argument that escalates into screamed slurs and a physical scuffle, observed by more than 50 classmates.*

*An opposing football team refuses to take the field against a team that has a female player, saying girls have no place in “boys’ sports.”*

*Students play an off-campus game called “Beat the Jew,” in which some students pretend to be Nazis chasing the student identified as “the Jew.”*

*A teacher discovers a “burn” page on Facebook filled with endless bigoted comments against a male student who is perceived to be gay.*

*A student white-pride group disrupts an all-school photograph.*

*A pep rally involves students portraying illegal immigrants, while other students costumed as border guards round them up with billy clubs.*

*A teen girl kills herself after unrelenting bullying targeted her as a “slut.”*

Hate crimes and bias incidents happen across the country with aggravating frequency. They vary on many levels, and your response must take that into account.

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### **So what has happened?**

Is it a hate crime? For that to be the case, two things are necessary. First, a crime has to have occurred—vandalism, physical assault, arson and so on. Second, the crime must be motivated, in whole or in part, by bias, and the targeted individual or group must be listed in the statutes as a protected class. Federally protected classes are race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. State and locally protected classes vary. If no crime has occurred—and again, that may be difficult to determine at the outset—it likely can be called a bias incident. (It may more aptly be labeled harassment or intimidation, and school policy might come into play.) A bias incident is biased conduct, speech or expression that has an impact but does not involve criminal action.

Reread the opening list of school incidents—drawn from recent headlines—as an exercise to make these distinctions. With limited information, answers may vary, but it will help to discern where one definition ends and the other begins. The University of Chicago also offers an **online guide** to help discern between hate crimes and bias incidents. Teaching Tolerance is also a partner with **Stop the Hate**, which offers training programs tied to these issues.

Why does this distinction matter? A hate crime likely will involve law enforcement. A bias incident likely will not.

The investigative force behind a hate crime may be focused on motivation and punishment—who did this, why did they do it, and how will they be brought to justice? That may not be your main objective as an administrator—and in most cases should not be your main objective. Your focus should remain on addressing the impact of the incident, not its motivation. How has the school climate been damaged? What must we do to repair and improve that climate?

You likely will have less control in managing the incident if police are involved, but you may have more resources available—patrolling in and around the school, community resource officers, increased investigatory capabilities and so on.

Already, in the first moment, framing a response is not easy. That's why this guide exists. In it, we outline nine key considerations as you chart your course during a bias crisis:

- Put safety first
- Denounce the act
- Investigate
- Involve others

- Work with the media
- Provide accurate information—and dispel misinformation
- Support targeted students
- Seek justice, avoid blame
- Promote healing

Before you move to these steps—which are much more simultaneous than linear—ask yourself another question: What resources do we have in place to manage our responses?

Does the district have legal or security personnel who will be called to help with the investigation? Who will serve as the media spokesperson? Does anyone have experience in that role (talking to media about sensitive issues, training in crisis management)? Who else needs to be involved in the school, at the district level, in the community?

Start creating a list of resources you have (a written school lockdown policy that may come into play, a designated phone line that can be used to share updates with parents, neighboring Boys & Girls Clubs of America that might provide meeting spaces and so on), making connections that will help you move forward. Your resource list should include people as well—influential community members who may serve as allies in a crisis.



Now also is the time to activate the incident response team. You can start small—draw in a handful of key people—but know that as the response unfolds, the team may grow so that it is both representative of and responsive to the school community.

(Now also is the time to be thankful for any of the pre-crisis work you have put into play. You can't truly plan for the specificity of this moment, but you can be better prepared.)

And as an educator or school trustee, steel yourself for the following:

***Bad news travels fast—and far—these days***  
Gossip and rumor, aided by cell phones and the Internet, spreads throughout your school, to other schools, other cities, other states and other nations within hours, if not moments. Things may escalate far more quickly than you expect via social media outlets,

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mainstream media and, in some cases, on hate groups' websites, which may twist the facts and create new issues to address.

### **You may be the hub**

In a crisis moment, you have less time to think and plan than you would like, and students, teachers, staff and others may be coming to you for immediate guidance. It also means you may be getting calls from the mayor's office, community groups and the media before you have had a chance to gather a full report about what has actually happened on your school's campus.

### **Judgments will be rushed**

The wider community may already have taken sides and formed opinions before anyone fully understands the situation. It is imperative for you to have structures and plans in place for crisis management, specifically around information management and the dispelling of rumors.

### **Balance the desire for speed with the need for thoroughness**

Don't let the chaos of a crisis situation derail your work. Focus on what needs to be done, and make sure you don't allow someone else's deadline to distract you from the work needed to manage this crisis. Be ready to say, "We don't have enough information yet to make that determination," while also understanding that the longer it takes to gather that information, the more misinformation may grow and spread.

### **Use or create tools to spread accurate information**

You may add a special page to the school website where updates are placed. Email also can be a useful tool for sending updates, though remember that everyone might not have access to email. A campus newsletter or newspaper also can be a tool for spreading accurate information about the incident and the ongoing investigation.

### **Step Three: What Comes Next?**

The crisis has faded. Media have moved on to other news stories. School days have returned to a relatively normal routine. You've had time to catch your breath.

And now the real work begins. Change is not easy, particularly long-term change involving a school's climate or culture. Roland S. Barth, educator and founder of the Principals' Center at Harvard University, puts it this way: "All school cultures are incredibly resistant to change, which makes school improvement—from within or without—usually so futile. Unless teachers and administrators act to change the culture of a school, all innovations... will be

destined to remain superficial window dressing, incapable of making much of a difference."

This is where you, as an educator or school trustee, can make a real difference, by putting time, energy and resources toward improvement plans.

Educator Sonia Galaviz, an Idaho elementary schoolteacher, urges educators and school trustees to hold themselves and others to high standards. "The message is, 'I'm willing to push myself, and you guys are coming with me,'" she said. The push is worth it.

Increasingly, educational leaders at all levels acknowledge the role of climate in the successes and failings of schools. A steady stream of research—including studies by the National School Climate Center and the High School Survey of Student Engagement—indicates that a positive school climate reduces conflicts, harassment, bullying and violence, making schools safer and more inclusive. It also fosters social and civic development while gradually bolstering student academic performance as changes gain traction. A more positive school climate also can improve staff morale, boosting employee satisfaction and retention rates.

Enter this post-crisis phase with an open mind. The work to change the climate and culture of a school can turn long-held beliefs upside down. When you closely examine patterns—in class assignments, in discipline referrals, in access to privileges and opportunities—you may discover that the school has been sending unintentional messages that result in stratification of the school community, with deep divisions between the "haves" and the "havenots."

Take a deep breath and keep the objective in mind—the desire to create a school and school district where all are welcome and all can thrive.

*[This material can be found at*

*<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/responding-to-hate-and-bias-at-school.>]*



**NASB  
Board of Directors  
and Executive  
Committee  
Joint  
Teleconference**

**March 12, 2018**

**Beginning  
Promptly at  
700pm**

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