

Solutions for Safety

Kids can't learn if they don't feel safe in school settings

By *L. Earl Franks, Ed.D., CAE*



School safety has emerged as a topic of utmost concern for our entire nation and especially for those of us in education. As a former teacher and school principal, I have always said that student safety is the top priority, because students can't learn if they don't feel safe.

Ask any parent, and they will tell you that their children's safety is the most important factor when they send them off to school every day. Unfortunately, one-third (34 percent) of parents fear for their child's physical safety while at school, according to PDK's 2018 Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. The poll also revealed that only 28 percent of parents are "extremely/very confident" in their school's security, while 41 percent are "somewhat confident," and 31 percent are "not so/not at all confident."

Following the recent tragedies at schools across the nation, NAESP has pushed for a nonpartisan, comprehensive approach to improving school safety and mental health services in schools. We realize that school safety and student well-being are complicated issues, but we believe that the nation must find research-based policy solutions that lead to meaningful change. And these solutions must begin with those involved in education on a daily basis.



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"A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools" provides an outline for educators wishing to improve school safety and increase access to mental health supports for children and youth. The document includes policy recommendations, best practices, and roles of key leadership personnel regarding school safety and climate. <https://bit.ly/2uLASzh>



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Leveraging work that has been done by organizations—education-related and otherwise—NAESP continues to work to identify and elevate strategies, policy recommendations, and solutions to improve school safety and access to mental health services in schools. Our goal is to unite all groups in support of policy development and implementation to ensure a comprehensive approach, and improve alignment of federal, state, and local policies.

NAESP has developed resources to foster school safety initiatives. Specifically, NAESP is working to:

- Disseminate comprehensive, schoolwide approaches to improving school safety and mental health services.
- Advance solutions that best support effective design and implementation of programs that facilitate a multi-tiered system of supports.
- Push for alignment of federal, state, and district efforts to support the development and implementation of research-based, comprehensive school safety plans.
- Identify best practices and strategies in support of blending state and federal funding streams in education and mental health services.

It is our sincere hope that through genuine collaboration, we can improve awareness of all efforts, break down silos, and work collectively to advance a shared mission that moves the needle meaningfully on school safety. **P**

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