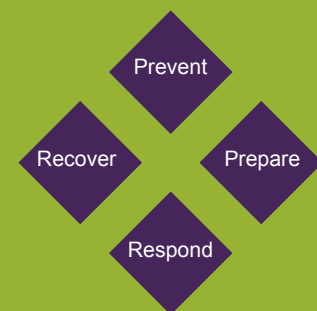


# Colorado Safe Schools


A joint publication of the Colorado School Safety Resource Center and the CU-Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence  
Colorado Department of Public Safety and the University of Colorado-Boulder



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## School Climate and Academic Success: Safety Matters



With consistent pressure to ensure that students meet their academic goals, schools sometimes find it necessary to cut health and prevention activities from the budget and the schedule. Compelling evidence indicates that a positive school climate (one that encourages health conscious choices, school bonding, and protective factors) is linked to improved academic performance.

Researchers from WestEd who administer the California Healthy Kids Survey find that high performing schools in their sample have several factors in common:

**Nutrition and physical activity:** Students who engaged in some weekly physical activity and ate nutritiously had greater gains in test scores.

**Alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana**

**use:** Substance use appears to be a greater impediment to school progress in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools, with substance use on school grounds being the most problematic.

**School safety:** Students' perception of safety at school showed a strong positive relationship to their schools' Academic Performance Index (API) score.

**Resilience:** Students with perceived protective factors such as caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for participation) showed a strong positive relationship to API scores.

In short, schools see better test results when students have fewer health risks such as drug use or poor nutrition, and more protective factors like caring relationships within the school.

Bullying within a school environment is another factor that is associated with the academic performance of students at that school.

The Colorado Trust's recent bullying prevention initiative finds that schools with lower levels of bullying report higher CSAP scores. Evaluators

reviewed test scores of 54 schools that participated in all three years of the initiative. In the first year, almost 33 percent of the schools with below average bullying rates had above average CSAP scores, while only 14 percent of schools with above average rates of bullying achieved test scores that were above average.

In the second year, 47 percent of the schools with less bullying had higher-than-average CSAP scores. And only 6 percent of schools with higher rates of bullying achieved above-average test scores.

**"What we do in the name of health, safety, and well-being are linked with teaching and learning. Teaching and learning can't take place if students aren't healthy, aren't physically and mentally fit, or aren't safe."**

William Modzeleski, Director  
Safe and Drug-Free School Program  
U.S. Department of Education

According to the report highlights, "While the findings show an association between bullying and overall school performance, the data did not reveal whether low-achieving schools provided a favorable environment for bullying or whether bullying

in schools interfered with learning and achievement. The implications, say evaluators, are that both are likely true."

When students (or teachers) are afraid at school, they often have trouble in class and may stop going completely.

From surveys of teachers around the country, Allison Payne and colleagues Denise and Gary Gottfredson found that the threat of school violence results in lower attendance for both students and teachers.

They note, "Teachers in disorderly schools also spend a large proportion of their time coping with problem behaviors rather than in academic instruction, which results in lower levels of academic engagement, academic performance and eventually graduation rates" (2003).

A school environment rich in connectedness and safety sets the foundation for students to attain academic success. Factors like hunger, fear and stress that influence concentration must be addressed if we truly expect students to do their best in school. ❖

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## News from the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CSSRC)

The Colorado School Safety Resource Center has hired the first Outreach Consultant to begin working with pilot site schools and others across the state. Christine Harms joins the Center staff with five years experience in a School Safety Center in Pennsylvania, as well as teaching and school administration background.

The link to additional job postings can be found on the CSSRC website [www.safeschools.state.co.us](http://www.safeschools.state.co.us). You can also reach us at our new phone number: 303-239-4435.

The CSSRC has recently posted an online survey for school staff, administrators, security personnel, law enforcement, parents and others with a stake in the school safety mission to provide feedback about training and resource needs across the state. Please visit our website and take the online survey in order for us to better provide needed resources next school year.

School sites have been chosen to pilot school safety services and recommendations from the CSSRC. Adams City High School, Durango High School, Kemper Elementary School, Cortez Middle School and Montezuma-Cortez High School will be participating in the pilot site project. In addition, schools in those districts, as well as in the Hayden and Lewis-Palmer schools will be participating in a pilot of a First Responder School Mapping project as provided for in legislation in 2008. Please watch our website for updates about the pilot site projects.

## SCSS Offers Free School Climate Surveys

The Safe Communities~Safe Schools online student surveys are now available to schools through a secure website. Using core questions on school climate, bullying, violence, alcohol and drug use, and protective factors, schools can gain a better understanding of their specific violence prevention and safety needs and, ultimately, develop a strategic plan to meet those needs.

Upon completion of the survey, schools will receive a comprehensive report based on responses. These results will include state and national comparisons, where available.

Surveys for staff and parents will be available to schools next fall.

Following the assessment, schools may obtain further technical assistance in areas such as improving safety plans (including crisis plans), implementing evidence-based violence/drug prevention programs and strategies, as well as information on conducting risk and threat assessments.

Contact CSPV to discuss your options and to schedule a school climate assessment for next fall.

Call: 303-492-1032 or 1-866-SAFE790  
Email: [SafeSchools@colorado.edu](mailto:SafeSchools@colorado.edu)  
Web: [www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools)

## NIMS Compliance Plans - Deadline July 1, 2009

By July 1 all Colorado school districts must have a plan and timeline in place for meeting NIMS compliance. A position paper developed by key Colorado education and safety agencies has been updated with specific requirements and resources to help your school district meet the requirements.

Visit <http://cdpsweb.state.co.us/nims.html> for more information.

## Safe Schools Regional Training September 29-30

CSSRC and SCSS will host their next prevention and school safety training in Grand Junction in the fall.

**Registration Details Coming Soon!**