



COMMUNICATIONS

BEFORE, DURING & AFTER A TRAGEDY

SIERRA PIZZOLA

WORK

- Communications Specialist
- Communications Business

EDUCATION

- Schodack CSD
- Syracuse University
- NYS Public Schools K-12

WHY Greenville?

MICHAEL BENNETT

CURRENT

Father of two, Husband, Community Member

- Superintendent
 - Greenville CSD, Greene County
 - 1,100 Students

FORMER

- Assistant Superintendent, Principal
 - Schodack CSD, Rensselaer County
 - 900 Students
- Assistant Principal, Special Education Teacher, Coach
 - East Greenbush CSD, Rensselaer County
 - 4,000 Students

morning of
FEBRUARY 9, 2004



afternoon
FEBRUARY 9, 2004

NO TRESPASSING
BY UNAUTHORIZED
PERSONS DURING AND
AFTER SCHOOL HOURS
EXCEPT BY THE PRINCIPAL

SEE THE LAW
FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON SCHOOL ZONE
VIOLATIONS
AND PENALTIES

DRUG FREE



GUN FREE

SCHOOL ZONE

FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON SCHOOL ZONE
VIOLATIONS AND
PENALTIES

HOWARD L. GOFF



MIDDLE
SCHOOL

HIGHS & LOWS



**Trial & News
Coverage**



**Public &
Private**



**Ongoing
Recovery**

2008 LIFE CHANGE

- Principal
- Assistant Superintendent
- 2008-2022 School Shootings
- Parkland



THE CLUB NO ONE WANTS TO JOIN

- February 14, 2018
- Advocacy
- Published
- NASSP





GREENVILLE, NY

COMMITMENT TO SAFETY





SINGLE POINT & BUZZER ACCESS



ID BADGES



SECURITY CAMERAS



3

DESIGNATED AREAS



BLUE LIGHTS



GREENVILLE

Central School District



A wide-angle photograph of a dirt road stretching into the distance, flanked by green and yellow fields under a heavy, stormy sky. The road is the central focus, leading the eye towards the horizon. The sky is filled with dark, grey clouds, suggesting an approaching storm. The overall mood is tense and atmospheric.

BEFORE

THE STORM

A police officer in a dark uniform with a name tag that reads "D. ROGERS" is leaning down and talking to a young boy. The boy is wearing a grey t-shirt and has his hands near his face. They are outdoors, with a dark car visible in the background. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daylight. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

A uniform, planned, and practiced response to any incident is the foundation of a safe school.

**“I never thought it could
happen here.”**



**What we plan is based
on what we know.**



**What we do is based
on where we are.**



STEPS

TO GO ABOVE & BEYOND

HOST A

SAFETY FORUM

- Annually in September
- Invite the whole community
- Presentation by admin
- Opportunity to ask questions
- Connect with parents and families
- Listen to community
- Follow up on changes & questions

TOPICS

Importance

NYS Standards

Above & Beyond

SRO

Partnerships

SRPs

Expectations

Questions

SEND QUARTERLY

SAFETY LETTERS

- Quarterly
- To all staff members & community
- Share expectations
- Keep safety front of mind
- Communication from the top
- Relevant Topics



GREENVILLE
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Michael Bennett
Superintendent of Schools

September 14, 2023

Dear Families:

Safety is one of my top priorities here at Greenville. As we get into the school year, we will continue to take inventory of safety procedures and processes to ensure our schools remain safe places for students to learn. Unfortunately, this continues to be an area of high concern not only here at Greenville, but across the state and our nation.

Blue Light System

Over the summer, we installed a blue light system that will be imperative to on-campus communications in an emergency. Due to the number of staff members that travel between buildings, the number of classes that are taught outside, and the overall geography of the campus, the District sought to install technology capable of alerting individuals who are outdoors during an emergency. With this new system, blue lights strategically placed throughout campus will prominently flash if a lockdown is initiated. The flashing blue light will notify individuals who are outside of the buildings to leave campus or move to a designated alternative location.

Emergency Response Protocols

In light of the recent swatting calls that have been occurring in other districts in our area, I think it's important that families understand exactly what will occur in the event of an emergency on campus. The second page of this letter contains a parent guide to emergency response in schools that we created based on information provided by [Questar III](#). These are the five emergency protocols that we use here at Greenville.

What You Can Expect From Us

In the event of an emergency, an initial message notifying families of the situation will go out via text, phone call, email, social media, and the school website. We will continue to communicate with the community, even if no new information is available, by providing timestamped updates. When the situation is resolved, we will send out an update stating the status of the emergency, and indicating that communication is the "final" update about the situation.

If you have specific questions while the District is experiencing an emergency, our School Communications Specialist will, to the best of their ability, monitor messages and respond to social media comments in a timely manner.

Update Your Contact Information

We encourage all members of the school community to make sure that their contact information is accurate in our records, so we can reach you in a timely manner. You can also use the "Student Information" section of ParentVue to update your information. If you are not currently receiving communications from the District, please email pizzolas@greenvillescd.org or call 518-966-5070 x523. It is also important to regularly check your email and phone for updates and to follow our website or social media channels for additional information.

Contacting School in an Emergency

In the event of an emergency, please refrain from calling the school offices, or entering the school grounds. School secretaries are an integral part of our emergency response teams, and their phone lines must be kept open to aid in resolving the situation. Additionally, parking lots and roads surrounding the campus must be kept clear for emergency personnel to easily access them, should their services be required.

We understand the idea of an emergency occurring at a school can be overwhelming, but it's imperative that we stay vigilant and prepare for the unexpected. I encourage you to attend the upcoming Community Engagement Session on school safety where I'll give a presentation on our safety procedures and then open the floor for a safety-related Q&A. The event is Wednesday, September 27th at 6:00pm in the Middle/High School Auditorium.

Sincerely,
Michael Bennett
Superintendent of Schools

Parent Guide FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN SCHOOL



SHELTER-IN-PLACE

Action used when students and staff are required to remain indoors, perhaps for an extended period of time, because it is safer inside the building or room than outside. Depending on the threat or hazard, students and staff may be required to move to rooms that can be sealed (such as in the event of a chemical or biological hazard) or without windows, (such as a bomb threat) or to a severe weather shelter area (such as in the event of a tornado).



HOLD-IN-PLACE

Action used for an internal incident or administrative matter such as students fighting in a hallway, a maintenance issue, or a medical emergency that requires limited student and staff movement. This is intended to keep students and staff out of the affected area until the situation can be rectified.



EVACUATE

Action used to initiate an evacuation of school building and/or grounds due to an unsafe condition within a building. (Includes fire, gas leak, chemical leak, unsafe structure). NYSED requires that all school buildings have eight evacuation drills per school year.



LOCKOUT

Action used to secure school buildings and grounds during incidents that pose an imminent concern outside of the school. The primary objective is to quickly ensure all school staff, students, and visitors are secured in the school building away from outside danger. Students have regular instruction and can move within the building according to their regular schedules. Exterior door access may be limited to create a single point of entry and visitors may be restricted from entering. Incident specificity and proximity will drive the response.



LOCKDOWN

Action used to secure school buildings during incidents that pose an immediate threat of violence to the building. The primary objective of a lockdown is to quickly ensure all school staff, students, and visitors are secured in rooms away from immediate danger. Halls are cleared and all staff and students move to secured areas behind a locked door and maintain silence. NYSED requires that all school buildings have four lockdown drills per school year.

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY QUESTAR III

THE FORMULA

1. Updates
2. Expectations
3. Call to action
4. Admin
5. Resources/
Review SRPs

EXPECTATIONS

SCHOOL

- Initial message via text, phone call & email
- Communicate even if no new information is available
- Time stamped updates
- Situation resolved message

FAMILIES

- Keep information up to date
- Stay subscribed to messages
- Do not come to campus
- Do not call the schools
- Talk about safety at home

TOPICS



Substance Abuse



**Cyber Safety
& Social Media**



**Specific
Incidents**



Transportation



SRPs



**Community
Partnerships**



**School
Hardening**



**Bullying
Prevention**



**Mental
Health**

SURVEY

How would you rate our
_____ communications?

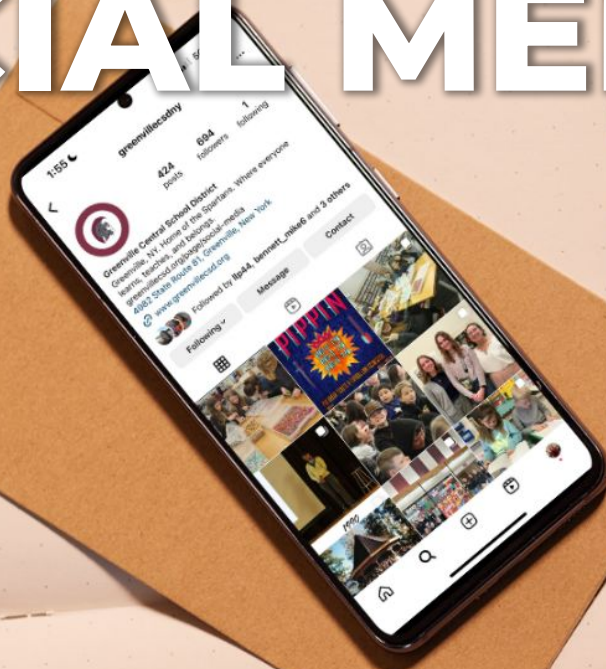
I'm interested in
communications about...

I prefer to receive _____
communications from
school by...

I want to receive
communications every...

How well informed are
you about...?

SOCIAL MEDIA



- Builds trust.
- Establishes a source for accurate information.
- Establish channels where people can ask questions.
- Commit to responding.

CONTENT

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Batch posts in the summer and schedule them to go out throughout the year.
- Meta Business Suite is a free, easy tool to do this.

HIGHLIGHTS

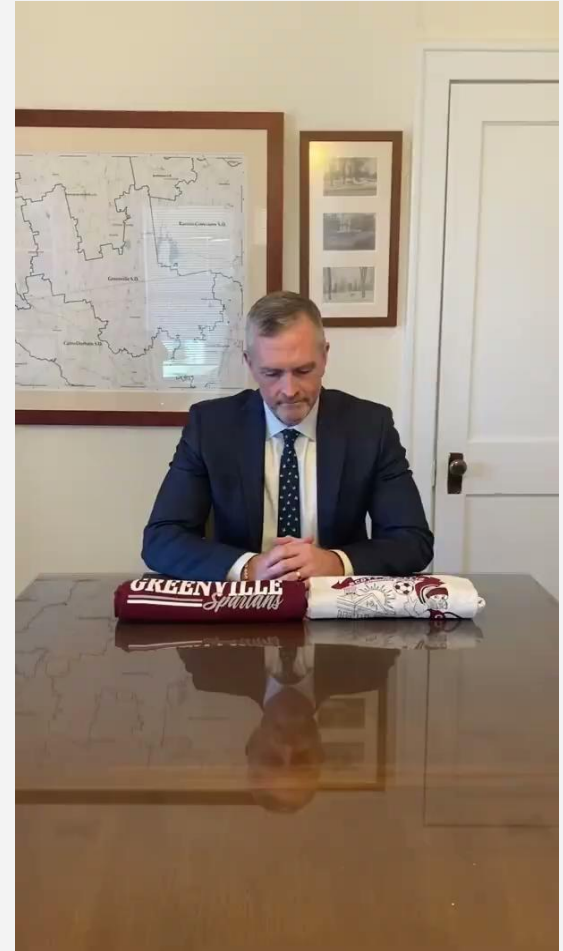
- Have an avenue for people to submit information they'd like shared online. DO NOT give access to too many people, have a designated "posting" person.

VIDEOS

- Interview questions, snow day videos, fun announcements, student hosted videos, game "edits," day in the life, etc.

ROLL THE FOOTAGE

- Builds trust
- Gets name/face out there
- Humanizes the job
- Makes people feel connected
- Approachable



SPARTAN SNAPSHOT



- Weekly on Thursdays
- Staff submits by Wednesday night
- Work with admins to share important (but not timely) messages
- Content: upcoming events, classroom activities, sports scores, hot topics, etc.

PIONEER

- One month dedicated to school safety
- Reaches a different audience
- Builds relationships with local media
- Monthly Superintendent articles to talk about timely topics
- Involve students in the writing and publishing process

Greenville athletes take it to the next level

By Harrison McKinley, 12th Grade English Department

I have many moments in this college and "Greenville offers me a lot of opportunities to be successful in college."

As an athlete at Greenville High School is something many students might not think about. Beyond the high school level, it is a whole different world that very few get the opportunity to do.

Some Spartans attend here on or play at the college level. It is also seen students at the national level as well as several athletes and athletes in high school and beyond.

Greenville's athletic program is one of the best in the state. It is a program that is recognized by the state and the nation.

As a Greenville athlete, I have many moments in this college and "Greenville offers me a lot of opportunities to be successful in college."

By Foster Britton, Grade 11th

Greenville recently launched an exciting wrestling program for children. I am a member of the program and I am excited to be a part of it.

Wrestling is a sport that has been around for a long time. It is a sport that is both physically and mentally demanding.

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Superintendent's Message: Well-rounded education

By District Superintendent Michael Bennett

At all three schools, students have the opportunity to participate in a musical. The middle school already has a musical performance in April. The elementary and high school students, The high school musical performance is on April 11 and 12 at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. The elementary school musical performance is on April 26 at 7 p.m. The middle school musical performance is on April 26 at 7 p.m.

At the middle school, the Science Olympiad team continues to do well. The team earned medals in many events at the Regional Tournament in East Greenville. Science Olympiad is a national organization that allows students to compete in various events in the field of science.

Some of the top students chose to enter some special, fast facts, football, school activities, and other events. Organizations like Science Olympiad students who have a passion to explore and learn more under the guidance of a mentor.

Being a college sport can be an incredibly rewarding experience. I have many moments in this college and "Greenville offers me a lot of opportunities to be successful in college."

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As a Greenville athlete, I have many moments in this college and "Greenville offers me a lot of opportunities to be successful in college."

Small businesses owners in our community face many challenges. As a result, they need to find ways to adapt. One way entrepreneurs adapt is by getting community support.

Community support is an important component of a small business. It is a support that is both physically and mentally demanding.

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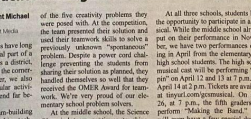
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Greenville athletes and cheerleaders play flag football for the Spartans in 2017.



Applying young wrestlers will take the sport to the next level of the new youth wrestling program in Greenville.



Students perform on stage during a musical at Greenville High School.

Small businesses adapt to rural communities

By Russa Korte, Grade 9

Small business owners in rural communities face many challenges. As a result, they need to find ways to adapt. One way entrepreneurs adapt is by getting community support.

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MASS COMMUNICATION

TEXTS/CALLS

- Emergencies ONLY
- School Closing

SPARTAN SNAPSHOT

- Weekly reminders via email (not time sensitive)

EMAIL

- Time sensitive or grade specific
- Can this go in the Snapshot instead?
- "Message from the Superintendent"

ENEWS

- Monthly
- Longer articles

District Level Communications
Max: 2/week **Average:** 1/week

The background of the slide is a light cream color, decorated with various colorful, watercolor-style shapes and speech bubbles. The colors include yellow, orange, pink, purple, blue, and green. The shapes are irregular and soft-edged, resembling hand-drawn or painted elements. Some are speech bubbles, some are stars, and some are abstract blobs. The overall aesthetic is bright and modern.

NO COMMUNICATION IS COMMUNICATION

The absence of factual information will often generate misinformation, speculation, and panic.



STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

Protocol

- Definition
 - Steps specific to your school

CHANNELS



- Use communication channels regularly to avoid “learning on the job” when a crisis hits.
- Teach users where to expect communication from you.
- Communicate early for transparency and to avoid the spread of misinformation.

EXAMPLES

- Text
- Phone Call
- Email
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter/X
- News Stations
- Website
- etc.

ROLES



- Depending on the nature of the emergency, several people may need to be involved in communication.
- One person may need to fill several roles.
- Back-up people should be identified for each role.
- Transfer communications functions to law enforcement when incident command is transferred.

TIERS

During an emergency, some people need information sooner than others.

Tier 1

- All Faculty & Staff
- Students on Campus
- Student Drivers

Tier 2

- Parents & Guardians
- Board Members
- Community (online)

Tier 3

- Neighboring schools
- Local leaders/offices
- Media

MEDIA TIPS

DON'T

- Answer “what if” questions.
- Say “no comment.”
- Speak off the record/on background.
- Use acronyms/technical terms, etc.
- Fill the awkward silences.

DO

- Follow up.
- Have 3-5 talking points to guide your statements.
- Answer the question you want to answer.
- Talk to the reporter, not to the camera.
- Lean on laws and regulations.

“What if...”

- That’s an interesting thought, but I think the real problem/key issue here is..
- That’s an excellent question and made me think about.

“No comment”

- I’ll have to check into the matter and get back to you.
- I appreciate your question, however, this is an ongoing investigation and there are limitations on the information I can legally provide at this time.
- While I would love to be able to answer all of your questions in much more detail, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act prevents me from sharing..

“Is it true...”

- I’m not able to confirm or deny that until law enforcement has time to investigate the matter and present us with the facts.
- I understand why you would like more details, but we must allow the investigative process to unfold properly to ensure a thorough and accurate understanding of the situation.

Awkward silence..

- Do you have any other questions for me?
- I appreciate you covering this story. If you don’t have any other questions for me I need to get back to attending to the needs of our school community.

A blurred photograph of a fire truck at night, with its emergency lights flashing. The truck is moving, creating a sense of urgency. The background is dark, and the lights are bright and out of focus.

DURING

AN EMERGENCY

ONE STEP AT A TIME

1. Sierra communicates with stakeholders via text/call/email.
2. Mike & Sierra connect over inventory planning.
3. Sierra follows up communication with stakeholders.
4. Sierra contacts Mike at predetermined times, unless Mike provides new information before.
5. Repeat until crisis is over.

INVENTORY AND PLANNING

Why did we go into a lockdown? Get specific so you understand the threat.

When did the incident take place?

Who has been involved since the incident began? Ex: police, fire, etc.

What are first responders doing to address the situation?

What are we doing about the incident?

Who do we need to notify about the incident?

When must we notify about dismissal changes? If the situation is not resolved.

What should parents do at this point?
Ex: do not call, follow for more info, etc.

The background of the image features a dark, textured surface, possibly asphalt, illuminated by several bright emergency lights. The lights are arranged in a line, with alternating red and blue colors. Each light source creates a prominent starburst or lens flare effect, with rays of light extending outwards. The overall scene is dynamic and suggests an emergency or law enforcement context.

EXAMPLES

INCIDENT

Late this morning a bullet was found in a high school classroom. The building principal immediately launched an investigation in conjunction with our School Resource Officer where they identified the student and determined there was no danger and no weapon on campus. As I've said before, safety is our ultimate concern and I am proud of the employee who immediately came forward to report this incident. While there was never any danger and no intent to harm anyone, I still felt it was important to communicate this incident with our school community. We take health and safety very seriously and I would like to reiterate that there was never any danger to our students or staff. Please take a moment to remember that every person plays a role in keeping our schools safe. If you see something that concerns you, whether in person or online, I encourage you to report it immediately. Thank you for your cooperation.

LOCKDOWN

GCSD:: Greenville CSD: Greenville Middle School and High School was placed in a Lockdown due to a system malfunction around 8:12am. There is no immediate threat and we are following protocol to resume our school day.

We will provide more information as it becomes available.

**Situation was resolved, no information was communicated.*

WORD CHOICE

Avoid using “emotionally charged language” and mind the context.

Trigger

- ✗ Situations of gun violence can be triggering.
- ✓ Gun violence can be a sensitive topic.

Diversity

- ✗ The agencies that responded to this incident were diverse.
- ✓ A variety of agencies responded to this incident including...

Anxiety

- ✗ We understand situations like this can cause anxiety.
- ✓ We understand the worries caused by these situations.

WORD CHOICE

Overreact

- Please do not overreact by coming to or calling the school.
- Coming to or calling the school can impede emergency service response time.

Normal

- Students will return to normal classes.
- Students will return to their regularly scheduled classes.

SYSTEM TEST

As part of our commitment to safety, and as a follow-up to the unexpected lockdown we experienced in September, representatives from our security company will be on campus this week to test our lockdown systems.

When?

Our lockdown test will be from 6:00am until 7:00am on Wednesday, November 8th.

What will happen during this test?

- Blue lights will flash.
- An announcement will appear on the outdoor signs alerting the community of the test.
- The “lockdown” audio messages will sound in all schools.
- All doors will automatically lock, and ID badges will not work.

What do I need to do?

No action needs to be taken for the system test, this is just a notification to our community.

Will this impact the school day?

No. This test will conclude by 7:00am, before students and faculty arrive. School will start on time and instruction will not be affected.

Will I get a text message/phone call about this?

No, we conducted a test of our Emergency Notification System in September. You will not receive a message on Wednesday morning.

Thank you for helping us keep our schools safe.

TEMPLATES

- Dangerous Animal
- Bank Robbery
- Unknown Person
- Elevator Stuck
- Medical Issue
- Altercation
- Flooding
- Hazmat Spill
- Tornado
- Gas Leak
- Power Outage
- Bomb Threat
- Weapon
- Swatting

A scenic landscape featuring a two-lane asphalt road with a double yellow center line that recedes into the distance. The road is flanked by green grass and shrubs. In the background, there are rolling green hills and a range of mountains with patches of snow under a bright blue sky filled with fluffy white clouds.

AFTER

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

THAT DAY

Communicate Quickly

- ✓ Provide times that you will communicate, and stick to those times even if you have no new information to provide.
- ✓ Share with families that you will communicate with them first thing in the morning.

Talking Points for Secretaries

- ✓ Provide everyone who may answer the phone for the public with talking points about what to say to the public.

Instructions for Parents

- ✓ Reunification Instructions

THE NEXT DAY

Send a “Debrief” Message

✓ “Now that I’ve had time to review all available information with our law enforcement, here is what we can share about the situation.”

Answer Questions

✓ If you’re getting common questions, answer them. And if you can’t answer them, share why.

Share Resources

✓ What’s available for students? Families? How do they access resources, and what are the resources for? Consider that many families probably haven’t had to access or had access to resources.

THE NEXT DAY

Continue to be Transparent

- ✓ Share reopening/back to school plans in great detail. Don't forget to include information about BOCES/off campus students.
- ✓ Leave NO student groups out.

Share Positivity

- ✓ If students are back to learning in their classrooms, smiling at recess, clubs and activities - share that, within reason.

Concerns

- ✓ Provide a place to share concerns or have questions answered. Provide an open line of communication. Set up a designated email?

AP

U.S. News World News Politics Sports Entertainment Business Technology Health Science Oddities Lifestyle

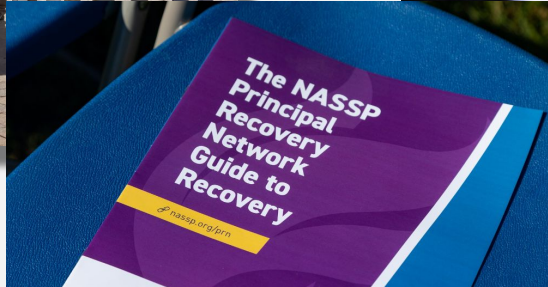
Principals from schools with shootings form support network

By KANTELE FRANKO April 10, 2019



Principals write a guide on school shootings they hope their peers will never have to use

School leaders who have been through the trauma of campus shootings lay out the tools that worked for them in recovering from such tragedies.



PRINCIPAL RECOVERY NETWORK Guide to Recovery

- WHAT TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE REOPENING?
- HOW TO ADDRESS STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH?
- HOW TO INVOLVE STUDENT INPUT IN

GUIDE TO RECOVERY

RECOVERY HELP SCHOOLS MOVE FORWARD AFTER SCHOOL SHOOTINGS



SECTION 1

SECURING SUPPORT AND RESPONDING TO OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE



SECTION 1

You may receive offers of support, including some you don't necessarily need.

To avoid this...

- Conduct an internal assessment to determine needs from community/outside groups.
- Craft and release official statement/social media post.

SECTION 1

Staff needs to be heard in the wake of initial recovery.

- Provide adequate infrastructure to ensure everyone is heard.
- Consider appointing a coordinator to assist with ongoing staff communication to keep you abreast of concerns, needs, etc.

SECTION 2

REOPENING THE SCHOOL

SECTION 2

Organize a staff meeting when the school is cleared.*

***Repaired, cleaned, no longer a crime scene, not reopened yet.**

- Staff need to feel comfortable and supported in their space before they can support students and/or begin teaching.
- Serves as opportunity to share updates, listen and coordinate next steps.

SECTION 2

Host an “open house” or “reunification day” when ready.

- Allows everyone to enter the building on their own terms and feel safe before returning for classes.
- Have mental health professionals/therapy dogs available.



SECTION 3

ATTENDING TO STUDENTS' ONGOING NEEDS

Determine what students need to succeed after a trauma.

Example

- Letters to colleges from school leaders explaining traumatic events in school contributed to grade/test score drops and suggesting consideration in application decisions.

Create a wellness center in school.

- Warm, inviting place for students and staff.
- Private/separate from other support areas (guidance, etc.)

Do not retraumatize.

- Be cognizant during future safety drills.
- Conduct regular surveys of students and staff to identify ongoing needs.



SECTION 4

HOLDING COMMEMORATIONS AND ANNUAL REMEMBRANCES

SECTION 4

Aversion to term “anniversary” (insinuates celebration).

- Include stakeholders in the decision-making process.
- Communities prefer “one-year mark” or “annual remembrance.”

SECTION 4

Consider making commemoration activities optional.

- Have extra support on hand (health professionals, retired teachers, volunteers, etc.)
- Could trigger anxiety

SECTION 4

Focus on things NOT related to the event.

- Even commemorations can be retraumatizing.
- Consider a day of service, writing “thank yous” to the community, moments of silence, etc.

SECTION 4

Consider something scalable.

- Make an event that is sustainable for following years.
- Plan months, not days, in advance
- Consider phasing out annual actions after all students who were involved have graduated.

A blurred, grayscale photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, a hand is raised high, palm facing forward. In the background, other students are visible, some with their hands raised, suggesting an interactive learning environment. The overall tone is bright and positive.

SECTION 5

LISTENING TO STUDENT VOICE

SECTION 5

Student voice MUST be heard & incorporated into the school's recovery process.

- Use existing leadership groups to encourage and organize positive voices among students
(*Example: Student Council*)
- Form new student group to advise ongoing recovery needs.

SECTION 5

Give students adequate time to talk about what happened.

- Not just with professionals, but with other students, trusted adults, and close friends.

NASSP Principal Recovery Network Guide to Recovery

- FREE Resource. No sign up.
- Originally created for school shootings
- Applicable to many crisis situations



nassp.org/community/principal-recovery-network/

THANK YOU



[pizzolacreative.com/
schoolsafety](https://pizzolacreative.com/schoolsafety)

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