

## ***International Meeting on Helping Schools Prepare for and Respond to Terrorist Attacks***

February 13 – 14, 2002

Jefferson Hotel

Washington, DC

On February 13 and 14, 2002, the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the U.S. State Department hosted an international meeting to focus on helping schools plan for and respond to terrorist attacks. The purpose of the meeting was to gain a better understanding of how other countries have dealt with the issue of possible terrorist attacks on schools and students; to look at the impact of such events on schools and students; to explore lessons learned; to identify what works and what doesn't; and to develop an informal sharing group of international educators and others who work with security and crisis management issues. Education and law enforcement representatives from Canada, Mexico, Ireland, United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, France, Israel, Spain, Turkey, and Japan attended the meeting.

In addition to a small number of staff from ED and OECD, representatives from U.S. Department of Defense Schools and U.S. State Department Schools attended the meeting. Three individuals representing the New York City Board of Education and the Children's Mental Health Alliance of New York also attended and made a presentation of their experiences following September 11, 2001.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Judge Eric Andell, U.S. Department of Education, Mr. Richard Yelland, OECD Programme on Educational Building (PEB), and Mr. Douglas Rosenstein, U.S. Department of State, welcomed the participants to the meeting. Representatives from each country introduced themselves and articulated their expectations for the meeting. The representatives expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to attend the meeting and begin such a dialogue.

In their introductions, the representatives expressed the following hopes and expectations:

- It is important that each country and school system be prepared for the risks of terrorist attacks, as well as the devastations of natural disasters.
- There must be a balance between security measures and the normal routine of study/feeling of safety in the learning environment. Schools must not become 'bunkers.'
- More prevention measures must be sought, as well as opportunities to integrate these measures into the daily school curriculum.
- Students need broader opportunities and horizons, especially as they learn of diversity as an opportunity, not a threat.

The representatives expressed enthusiasm for the sharing of information, ideas, plans, and strategies in an effort to strengthen each country's capacity to prevent terrorist attacks on schools and students through international cooperation.

### **The New York City Experience in Responding to Events of September 11, 2001**

An overview of school-related events following the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center was provided by staff from the New York City Board of Education and the Children's Mental Health Alliance. Mr. Gregory Thomas, Director, Division of Student Safety & Prevention Services (New York City Board of Education) described the September 11th event as one of the largest rescues known to man. He explained that approximately 25,000 people were evacuated from the vicinity of the attack, including students and school staff. The area is home to many schools; there are eight schools in the general vicinity, five of which were in immediate danger.

Mr. Thomas reported that September 11th was the third day of the school year. The plane crashes took place at around 8:48 a.m. and 9:06 a.m. Vibrations were felt throughout the area. The number of students in the Ground Zero area totaled approximately 5,600. All of the schools had safety plans, each unique to its school. Following the crashes, many of the students walked 40 minutes north to a neighboring school, while others went west to the Hudson River where they were moved by boat, and some went south to Battery Park. Students were sent in all directions. Some schools had to quickly revise their safety plans, because the school the students were directed to go to was also in the Ground Zero area.

Because of the magnitude of the attack, the following schedule was developed:

- **September 11**—All schools were kept open on an extended day schedule to assist parents. After-school programs were cancelled.
- **September 12**—All schools in New York City were closed.
- **September 13**—Students at the five schools in the Ground Zero area were temporarily assigned to other schools (a 40-block area was closed down).
- **September 14**—Guidelines were issued for all school staff to follow.

Mr. Vincent Giordano, Director, Student Support Services (New York City Board of Education) discussed the collaborative relationships established with the various systems in the city. All children and staff got home safely on September 11th. This was an accomplishment considering there are 1.1 million children in New York City and 40 superintendencies. He explained that while the New York City school system is prepared for "ordinary" daily incidents of disorder, no one was prepared for this level of trauma. The Board of Education immediately acknowledged the need for mental health services.

On the first day, the district worked with a psychologist who had been involved with providing mental health services following the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. A basic to-do

list was developed. The district reinforced the notion that school safety is the responsibility of the whole community. No support services were forced on any schools, individuals, and/or families. Some schools focused on a character education curriculum, emphasizing health and well-being, diversity, caring, honesty, and problem solving.

While no students, teachers, or staff were killed or seriously injured as a result of the terrorist attack, many—some 1600 students and 800 staff—lost family members and loved ones. The school district’s initial resources were targeted to these individuals, as well as students and staff in the five schools in the immediate vicinity of Ground Zero. Guides were sent home to parents, with recommendations to limit TV watching, talk together as a family, and become involved in the community. Because over 120 languages are spoken in district, a 24-hour, multi-lingual telephone hotline was established.

Although the school district did not lose a child or a staff member, they learned from the events of the Oklahoma City Bombing and Columbine school shootings that the impact of the trauma will not end soon. New York City may continue to experience the aftermath of the event in years to come. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety are just a few examples of potential mental health issues on the horizon.

The New York City Board of Education is currently addressing the following questions:

- Is each school’s safety plan where it needs to be? Each plan must be scrutinized because of the things that didn’t work on September 11<sup>th</sup>. For example, evacuation routes had to be changed, cell phones didn’t work, etc.
- Does each school’s safety plan include regular drills, as well as alternative options?
- Are all public address systems in working order?
- Do all schools have access to cell phones, as well as other communication systems, that can be used during times of emergency?
- Is the air quality safe for staff and students?
- Are mental health issues being adequately addressed in schools throughout the district, not just those in proximity to Ground Zero?

Ms. Pamela Cantor, President, Children’s Mental Health Alliance, provided a “Model for Crisis Support Team Partnership” for each school. She indicated that sometimes it takes a crisis to bring partnerships together. To this point, her agency has done the following:

- Developed a screening instrument for children in grades 4 - 12, to diagnose Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as well as other behaviors following a disaster. A benchmark instrument was developed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This instrument, as well as previous studies, indicates that between 12% and 25% of children suffer serious difficulties, 50% moderate difficulties, and 25% minimal difficulties after experiencing a disaster.

- Designed a “team architecture”—a multi-disciplinary structure for each individual school to meet that school’s needs. Mental health partnering is an important piece of the team architecture.
- Created a plan that within two years, every school in the district will have at least one mental health partner, as well as a “resource map” of services available to students and staff. This plan will be updated regularly, be user-friendly, and include regular trainings.
- Begun reviewing how to address the mental health needs of a school system, which includes getting through myths and taboos, as well as “packaging” mental health services to make them more accessible. The first area to be focused on is training for staff in non-therapeutic methods. Since the majority of students are also involved in after-school programs, staff training in these environments is also being considered.

After the presentation, several questions were asked as to whether the city saw an increase in the number of bomb threats, ethnic confrontations, and suicide attempts following the terrorist attack. According to the NYC presenters, there was an increase in the number of bomb threats. There was also a slight increase in the number of ethnic confrontations that took place, but not in the number of “bias” threats and crimes committed. The schools took precautions to prevent these incidents.

### **Placing Terrorist Attacks and Other Crises in Perspective: What is the Problem?**

Representatives from each country provided a brief overview of the nature and extent of the problem(s) they are facing regarding terrorism and other major crises such as chemical spills, school shootings, and bombs/explosions. Highlights of each country’s presentation follow.

#### ***Canada—Mr. David R. Pedwell and Mr. J. Kevin Cameron***

In 1975, a student with a rifle entered a school, killed a teacher, and injured several students. This was viewed as an isolated incident. In 1979, there was a train derailment that lasted several days. This was the largest peacetime evacuation the country has seen. There have been no major incidents since then.

On a different level, schools in Canada have experienced an increase in the presence and use of weapons and guns, as well as an increase in the incidence of intimidation and assaults. There have been isolated teacher assaults resulting in increased student suspensions, as well as increasing drug activity, gang activity, car theft rings, and Internet problems. There was also a school shooting in Tabor, Canada, one week after the April 1999 Columbine tragedy in the U.S., which has led to many of the reforms the school system is now engaged in (assessments, training, multi-disciplinary teams).

Since September 11th, the Canadian school system has acknowledged that they might experience difficulties unless they develop stronger plans. There is the need to take a closer look at “permit” groups who use the schools for other purposes, as well as immigration procedures to monitor

who enters and exits the country. In addition, the country needs to consider flight paths over schools, chemical plants, and water targets.

***France—M. Michel Champon, M. Jean-Marie Schleret, and M. Phillippe Bugeaud***

While France has not experienced a terrorist attack except in the subway and shopping arcades (1986 and 1994), it has experienced similar impact from two environmental crises. The first was the natural disaster that took place during Christmas vacation in December 2000. At that time, because of wind storms, there was serious damage on both school properties and the systems in place. If students had been in school, it would have been devastating.

The second was a chemical explosion outside the city of Toulouse in September 2001. The city of Toulouse has a population of approximately 400,000, and is two kilometers from the chemical factory. When the explosion took place, it was felt from five to ten kilometers away. The blast left 30 people dead (including one school-age student), 3,000 wounded, and damaged 2,500 dwellings. Approximately 100,000 individuals were declared victims. Public transportation was destroyed.

The explosion had both a direct and indirect impact on the schools. Of 184 schools, 79 schools and two universities were affected. One school with 850 students was destroyed – there were only cement walls remaining. Unfortunately, the emergency communication systems did not function and information did not get out. As a result, there were contradictory messages from the media. Radio messages also confused the information. It was difficult—and, at times impossible—to identify who needed help.

The event raised the question, “What should be done when a school is isolated from an accurate information and communication system?” Coordination was extremely difficult because of the faulty communication system. There was need for a system to facilitate the work of teams and for a plan to manage panic. Each school needed its own separate plan. The representatives recommended that schools develop better mechanisms to communicate and to evacuate students, that schools have their own rescue service in place.

***Ireland—Mr. Martin Heffernan***

The issues related to terrorism have evolved over the years. To many in the country, September 11th served as the “ultimate wake-up call,” solidifying the realization that it is impossible to have fail-safe solutions. The proximity of the Sellafield Nuclear Power plant to Ireland and related safety concerns are the subject of much current debate and controversy. Moreover, September 11th served only to focus the debate on another aspect of safety—i.e., the issue of perceived adjacent flight paths to the plant, and the potential for a similar air attack with devastating consequences. While this issue presents concern on a national level, on a micro level, schools may be considered soft targets and are vulnerable by the very nature of their occupants.

The present threats to students and schools in Ireland include theft, burglary, graffiti, arson, and assaults, both from external and internal sources. While all schools have internal alarm systems, there are no formal safe school policies and minimal security. The school system is considering the following questions: What level of security is necessary? How much will insurers influence

policy and design? What are we willing to pay for security? Ireland doesn't want fortresses—they want institutions for learning.

***Israel—Mr. Shmuel Barak and Mr. Yfrach Duchovny***

In 1974, there was a terrorist attack on a school—22 individuals died, and many others were injured. During that incident, the terrorists took over the school. From 1974 to 1992, emergency regulations were in place during which time parents acted as guards in schools. Between 1992 and 1995, the government made a decision to place professional guards in every school. In June 1995, school security was placed under the responsibility of the Israel Police as part of its general internal security. Since August 1995, extra guards have been placed at schools with large populations.

Israel police have identified five types of threats for schools: suicide bombers, car bombs at the entrance or exit of a school, close or long-range shooters, bombs placed inside or near a school, and terrorists invading a school and taking or killing hostages.

***Japan—Mr. Akishige Hirai and Mr. Takayuki Nakamura***

Japan used to be considered a safe country. Recently, however, there has been an increase in crime, such as rape, arson, burglary, and assault. There has also been a gradual increase in school crime. In an unprecedented incident in June of 2001, eight students were stabbed, and thirteen students and two teachers injured by an invader at a national elementary school.

Japan has been enforcing an 'open school' policy—no walls around the schools—which has both advantages and disadvantages. It indicates collaboration between schools and communities. It also means that it is easy for people to enter the school.

For the purpose of making both "open school" and "school security" compatible, and to respond to the question, "What needs to be done to keep the schools secure and safe?" a special committee was established at the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition, a checklist regarding school security was developed, and a budget for school security for fiscal year 2002 has been prepared.

***Mexico—Mr. Delfino Hernandez Lascares***

The main problems in Mexico seem to be chemicals, air contamination (smog and pollution), bomb threats, drug use, and drug trafficking. Bomb threats, as well as other levels of violence, are increasing. There is a great deal of family disintegration and an increase of young people carrying weapons. Juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, and alcohol abuse are on the rise. Street vendors are everywhere, selling weapons and victimizing poor children. There is fear that groups of foreign terrorists are operating in Mexico.

The elementary school system represents 12 million children. All of the above-mentioned issues are present in the schools, but they are unique in each individual school.

***Northern Ireland—Ms. Marie Martin***

Northern Ireland has been fighting the current wave of terrorism for over 30 years. The two primary problems are bombs (car and other) and community sectarian conflict. For example, in

North Belfast, there is a small Catholic primary school in a predominantly Protestant area. The students in this school are bused 100 yards to get to school safely and to avoid being harassed by adults. There are continued death threats and vandalism. Security measures over the last 30 years have reduced but not ended terrorism. Because of the small cities and small towns, no schools are out of harm's way, and collateral damage from attacks is usually high.

Northern Ireland is still recovering from an August 1998 bombing in Omagh, a town of 25,000 people. The tragedy took place on a Saturday, during a time of peace (during the Good Friday Agreement), two weeks before the start of a new school year. The town was filled with families and young people—it was “market day.” After a warning came that a car bomb would go off, shoppers were cordoned off in an area and not allowed to move. The bomb exploded in almost the same place where shoppers had erroneously been moved. The bomb explosion killed a total of 31 people, injured 400, and hospitalized 135. The area still keeps the memory of the event alive, and the schools continue to experience collateral damage from the tragedy.

The extent of the devastation is not always as the media portrays, but where it does happen, it is deep and devastating. According to those who work with terrorist issues, things are getting both better and worse. Terrorist activities are still taking place, but resolution is slowly moving from “solution by terrorism” to “solution by negotiation.” There is a need and a resolve to solve the wider, deeper problems. There is a need to win the war against terrorism by winning the hearts and minds of the population.

***Spain—Mr. Manuel Navarrete Paniagua***

In Spain, terrorism and school safety are considered two different issues. The country has suffered for 25 years as terrorists have tried to undermine the strength of the country. There have been selective attacks, such as an attack on a university professor who was killed in 1995. Terrorists are now targeting the press, politicians, and some universities in the Basque area.

Similar to Japan, the schools seem to be very safe places. Because of strict laws, it is difficult to gain access to guns and weapons. For the most part, the biggest problems are alcohol and drug abuse. However, as already mentioned, individuals believe that “things are getting better, and things are getting worse.” There is an increase in car bombs and evidence of more collateral damage, yet there is also greater resolve to work on these problems.

***Turkey—Mr. Yuksel Sezgin and Mr. Mehmet Tok***

The representatives from Turkey stated they have a different perspective and different concerns to most other countries. They have been fighting terrorism for over 30 years. Terrorist leaders frequently live in and/or train in Turkey. For many years, the authorities have been exploring a range of activities to counter and get rid of terrorism.

Between 1984 and 1997, 146 teachers lost their lives, 373 schools were destroyed, and many children died as a direct result of terrorism. Crisis centers have been set up under the coordination of the Secretary of Security, and walls have been constructed around schoolyards to control entrances and exits.

***United Kingdom—Mr. Richard Painter***

School security has a high profile in the UK. The most common problems have been arson, burglary, and theft, but violent crime has increased in recent years. Terrorism has been an issue for around 30 years, but is rarely targeted at schools. In 1995 a head-teacher was fatally stabbed while intervening in a gang-related argument outside the school gates. Within a few months, several young children were killed in a school shooting and, in another incident, children were attacked by a man wielding a machete at a nursery-school picnic. Following the stabbing in 1995, a cross-discipline workgroup was formed — its 22 recommendations have now been acted upon. More recent concerns include increasing reports of parent attacks on teachers, and the theft of students' cell-phones

After September 11th, there was recognition that there may be different threats from unexpected quarters. There was concern about issues between children of different ethnic and religious groups, particularly in the light of riots that had taken place in a number of multi-ethnic communities earlier in the year.

***United States—Mr. Bill Modzeleski***

There have been no reported cases of terrorism against U.S. schools or students. This is a questionable statement, however, because of the collateral damage experienced by America's young people. Throughout history, schools in the U.S. have experienced disasters, both natural and man-made. In 1937, there was a school explosion in New London, Texas. In addition, schools across the country have experienced and continue to experience earthquakes and hurricanes. In 1995, although no school children or faculty were killed, many lives were lost in the Oklahoma City bombing. In 1996, a plane crash involving high school students from Montoursville, Pennsylvania devastated the community. And since 1974, the country has dealt with more than 40 school shootings that have left many young people and teachers dead. The Columbine tragedy (April 20, 1999) killed 14 students and one teacher (including two suicides). Many in the country felt the impact.

The basic statistics seem to be improving, but this is a relative term, considering the impact that violence has on schools and students. With 53 million students, 3 million teachers, 15,000 public school districts, and 113,000 schools, there are 9.5 billion school days (180 school days times 53 million students), creating ample opportunity for tragedy and collateral damage. In addition, 75% of American schools were built before 1970, increasing the vulnerability of potential grief and loss as these buildings may not be able to withstand attacks, explosions, or natural disasters.

The U.S. continues to experience violence in schools in a pyramid fashion, as represented by the most recent annual statistics:

- Targeted Homicides (0-13 average)
- Homicides (29)
- Firearms expulsions (2,837)
- Serious violent crimes (185,600)

- Violent crimes (884,100)
- Theft (1,605,500)
- Bullying and harassment

### **Special Presentations**

During the two-day meeting, the participants had the opportunity to hear from two cabinet members of the United States government—Attorney General John Ashcroft and Secretary of Education Roderick Paige.

#### ***Attorney General, John Ashcroft***

United States Attorney General John Ashcroft expressed appreciation for the support and cooperation given to the U.S. following the September 11th terrorist attacks and acknowledged America's own lack of experience. He stated that terrorism is difficult to categorize but that we must all be accountable.

In summary, the Attorney General said there is a lot to learn, and that the issue is a multi-national endeavor. Planning, training, and execution of plans need to take place in all countries. Until recently, the mindset has always been adjudication and prosecution. The emphasis now moves to prevention. The best prevention strategy is information—it is the friend of freedom, the tool to display and defeat terrorism. A system of information needs to be developed to use in schools as a way to alert students and parents.

The Attorney General stated, “Security is not done for or to you—it is done with you.... Students need to understand the difference between heroes and terrorists—a hero dies to save, a terrorist dies to kill. Terrorists reject the culture of freedom at its ultimate level. A hero defends liberty, a terrorist destroys liberty. . . .” Curricula is needed to help students and their families to understand the difference between a hero and a terrorist.

#### ***Secretary of Education, Roderick Paige***

Secretary of Education Roderick Paige also addressed the participants. He indicated that safety in schools is a primary concern. The goal is not only safe schools, but the community's understanding of safe schools. Until recently, the American definition of “safe schools” was based on the school shooting that took place at Columbine High School in Colorado in April 1999. September 11th changed that definition somewhat, as schools in the vicinity of the World Trade Center were closed down and turned into morgues. The heroism of teachers who shepherded students to physical and emotional safety was honored.

Secretary Paige stated that there is the need to collaborate and talk about prevention strategies. Even those who have not had direct experiences with terrorism need to plan, share, and prevent. Students want to be a part of the solution—they don't want to be bystanders. Young people must be included in attempts to make the situation better. In addition, from the Oklahoma bombing, the U.S. learned that psychological impact lingers—it doesn't just go away over time. Several

years down the line, the U.S. is still seeing mental health issues and suicides as residual effects from traumatic events.

### **Current Practices in Preparing for and Responding to Terrorist Attacks and Other Major Crises**

Schools continue to be, for the most part, safe places. A few countries (Turkey, Israel) have experienced terrorism directly against teachers, students, and school buildings. Several countries also deal with threats against and harassment of students and teachers. All countries have experienced other crises, such as explosions, ice storms, and earthquakes, that have affected students and schools. All countries also realize that they have schools that are “potentially” in harm’s way—schools are built next to nuclear power plants, next to railroad tracks, in the path of hurricanes, next to factories that manufacture explosives or explosive material. Furthermore, all countries have experience dealing with collateral damage to students and schools as the result of bombs and shootings.

As each country’s representative(s) presented an overview of how that country is addressing the issue of possible terrorist attacks on schools and students, as well as how it is addressing other major crises that impact schools, several key themes emerged:

- Terrorism is an irrational action that needs international involvement and cooperation among a wide group of agencies including schools. Education is a long-term solution to resolving issues related to terrorism.
- Sharing of information is one of the best strategies for preventing and mitigating the effects of attacks on schools or students.
- Security must be balanced with the need to maintain a normal routine of study and learning. Countries do not want to “bunkerize” schools.
- Technology should not be viewed as replacement for personnel. Technology should be viewed as a supplement and an aid to personnel. As one representative stated, in his country every system includes three components—manpower, means, and technology. One never replaces the other; each goes hand in hand.
- Most countries either have or are developing plans to deal with potential terrorist attacks or other major crises, such as explosions.
- Entirely new strategies for preventing and responding to terrorist incidents are not needed. Most schools have safe school plans. Many of these plans deal with natural disasters, such as earthquakes, and they can be modified to deal with manmade events.
- Some countries require schools located in vulnerable areas (e.g., by nuclear power plants or with air contamination problems) to hold regular evacuation and/or lockdown drills.

- Safety plans developed to address major crises and terrorist attacks must include a component to deal with the short- and long-term psychological trauma that impacts students, faculty, and parents.
- Safety plans must be taken seriously and be developed with community input and support. School safety plans must have multiple contingencies.
- In designing strategies for dealing with terrorism, special consideration must be given to ensuring that the needs of children with disabilities are met, as well as the needs of children not in public schools, (e.g., in boarding schools).
- When appropriate, young people need to be involved in planning and carrying out plans.

In addition to the themes that emerged, the following solutions, practices, and recommendations that are currently being implemented and/or planned were mentioned:

- *Building design.* This includes location, building codes, and safe access, as well as intruder alarm systems, lighting systems, locking mechanisms, surveillance cameras in high risk areas, and metal detectors. Although documentation in school security design is not yet available, it is recommended that environmental considerations be taken into account to decrease risk and increase safety.
- *Multi-disciplinary partnerships and plans.* Relationships and teams need to be established before a crisis or event takes place in order for appropriate flow of communication (chain of command), training of teams, and role responsibilities to occur. Schools that have these partnerships in place have benefited from the additional resources.
- *Prevention, crisis intervention, and ongoing support plans.* All safe school plans need to address prevention components (policies and procedures, information, staff training, skill building, alternative activities); crisis intervention (policies and procedures for immediate help, communication procedures, established mental health support services for both students and staff); and ongoing support plans, including support therapies, rituals to assist with grief issues, youth input, etc.
- *School curriculum.* In a safe school, a climate of positive learning is evident in each area of the school. Curricula that integrates these issues into various disciplines and school subjects helps facilitate a learning environment that promotes safety.
- *Legislation.* Most countries have now passed laws and instituted policies and procedures that reflect the work and focus on school safety.
- *Funding.* Some countries have instituted taxes to assist in the funding of school security issues.
- *Directory of resources.* Several countries have provided their schools and communities with directories of resources. These assist crisis workers when moments of need arise.

- *Youth parliaments.* The involvement of young people is demonstrating success—both in the planning and implementation stages, as well as in those countries where loss and grief have impacted schools and communities.
- *Technology.* Students in some countries are being exposed to other cultures through the use of technology. For example, students in Northern Ireland are being linked with schools and students in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.
- *School uniforms.* Some school systems require students to wear uniforms—research is not yet available, but the perception is that this policy decreases problem incidents at school.
- *Debriefing with principals, teachers, and law enforcement officials following a crisis.* It is important to provide adult school and security staff with continual communication and opportunities to share. It decreases feelings of isolation and increases the concept of working together.
- *School security Web sites.* Schools and communities appreciate opportunities to learn from each other.

Mr. Bill Modzeleski, Director of the U.S. Department of Education’s Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, summarized the solutions and recommendations with “lessons learned” from September 11th and other crises:

- While we may not be able to prevent every major crisis from occurring, we can take actions to minimize their effects.
- Major crises—both natural and manmade—have a significant effect on schools even when they don’t directly impact schools.
- Students are not the only ones affected by major crises; so are private and public school teachers, faculty, and parents. Further, the impact of these crimes often extends beyond the boundaries of the system where the event occurred. (The impact also extends beyond time.)
- Dealing with mental health issues of students, faculty, and parents is essential to the recovery process. (This is the element most often missing from crisis plans.)
- Resources for preventing and responding to crises are often located in communities in which schools are located. Schools need to foster linkages with host communities, groups and organizations including: police, fire, emergency services, victim services, mental health, health, and faith-based organizations. (Prior to September 11th, we looked at fire departments simply as means for practicing fire drills.)
- Every school must have a school safety plan which needs to be more than a “shelf document.” School safety plans need to be operational documents developed with the input of the community. They must address emerging issues, such as: evacuation, attendance, student release policies, transportation, communication, rumor control, lines

of authority, public affairs, issues related to threats of terrorism and bioterrorism, and information for parents.

- Practice makes perfect. Practice doesn't need to be drills but can be "table top" exercises and other events that do not tie up precious time for teaching. Also, schools need to be part of larger community crisis drills.
- Plan ahead. Things can be done today that will help you tomorrow.
- Use experts—not vendors—that know you and your community to help you design programs and strategies that meet your needs.
- Review activities planned for students in the aftermath of a tragedy. Some activities and some materials are inappropriate (and/or developmentally inappropriate).
- While we have learned a lot about preparing for and responding to major crises, much more research is needed.
- Keeping schools and students safe is hard work!

#### **Questions for Consideration**

Throughout the meeting, several questions emerged. They included the following:

- *Communication during a crisis.* A communication system might go down during a crisis due to heavy use. Or, it might be shut down because of other potential problems such as bomb detonation. What are alternatives and options to communication systems so that schools and communities will continue to receive accurate information?
- *Age of school buildings.* What types of modifications can be made to existing structures to reduce the risk of damage and increase the safety of students and staff in the event of a natural or man-made disaster?
- *School building plans and privacy laws.* Should the public have access to school plans? Does public access sacrifice the safety of students and schools?
- *Effectiveness of safe school plans.* Since it is difficult to monitor the effectiveness of safe school plans, is there an available instrument to assist with this issue?

Representatives were encouraged to take these questions home, conduct some data collection and information gathering, and possibly use these questions to begin to develop a research base and a forum around which to have future discussions.

## **General Discussion/Next Steps**

There was consensus that all representatives in the group want to do more. Judge Eric Andell noted that the U.S. would be happy to remain the central contact point. In terms of communication, it was recommended that a listserv be set up for periodic sharing of information.

Judge Andell also indicated that the next major step should be a conference, not a meeting. It is important to expand the invitation list so as to enhance the skills and building blocks of all involved.

In addition, the following recommendations were made by the various representatives:

- Provide a record of this meeting—both in electronic and hard copy form.
- Begin the process of data gathering. It is a good practice, especially if all countries are interested in research-based evidence of what works and what doesn't work.
- Develop a Web site.
- Continue regular dialogue, both individually and as a group, via technology and with a plan for future meetings. Combine human and electronic means of communication.
- Share the report of this meeting with appropriate individuals and organizations within each country. Circulate the information—there has been a lot of information provided, and it is important to make use of it.
- Utilize the links and relationships that have been established, particularly related to specific crises.
- Establish a network under the auspices of an existing international organization or similar structure for the purpose of maintaining the motivation to continue these discussions. (It was also suggested that the name of group be changed so as not to draw attention to “anti-terrorism” or “terrorist attacks.”)
- In those countries where available, share ideas for a “directory of services.”
- Develop evacuation drill and practice guidelines in this group, since there are valuable lessons from which to draw upon.
- Take the responsibility for covering own costs for future meetings.
- Learn from each other's experience!