

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY, 12-14 NOVEMBER 2003**

DRAFT SUMMARY AND PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER WORK

Introduction

Accidents, arson, stabbings, theft, earthquakes, vandalism, shootings... The range of problems and threats facing schools from within and without is vast, and their number is increasing in many countries and communities. In response to these challenges in society and education, the range of approaches used to address these problems is also growing. Architects, project managers, ministry representatives, psychologists, teachers, security consultants, police officers, academics and many others have a role to play in helping to implement these solutions. From 12 to 14 November 2003, 100 representatives from 28 countries met in Paris to discuss how the variety of problems and solutions concerning school safety and security are addressed in their respective countries. The conference was opened by Constance Morella, United States Ambassador to the OECD, and Berglind Asgeirsdottir, Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD.

All members of our society agree that ensuring the safety and security of our children in their place of learning is a priority, but achieving this objective is not evident. To better understand the issues, participants were posed the following six questions. How can safety and security risk be assessed in schools? How can schools be equipped to manage a crisis when it occurs? Do fences and other physical security measures really make our schools safer? How successfully have specific local programmes addressed problems such as bullying and violence in schools? How do countries incorporate education and training programmes for teachers and students into the curricula? *And importantly, how can the Organisation for Economic Co-operation assist those engaged in this area to tackle this important social issue?*

A rich diversity of experiences was recounted at the meeting, and the context of the situation clearly plays an important role in the perception of the problem. However, this meeting also illustrated that there is sufficient commonality of factors to make such sharing of ideas and practice a very necessary and rewarding exercise. There is a significant role for the OECD to play in *analysing the nature of the problem and in evaluating the effectiveness of solutions*. The following report will briefly describe and evaluate several themes identified during the plenary sessions. These themes were further analysed in five working group sessions. Within the context of these themes, this report will also describe how participants perceived that the OECD could play a role in further work in this area.

Outcomes of sessions and working groups

Theme 1: Assessing the problem: Security and safety risk assessment in schools

*We need to know why we are reporting and how this reporting can make things better.
(Rick Draper, Australia)*

A number of risk assessment tools are currently used in schools to manage threatening situations. In May 2002, the United States Secret Service, in collaboration with the United States Department of Education, published a threat assessment guide to prevent targeted school violence. Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand (AS/NZS) have also created a generic framework for establishing the context, identification, analysis, evaluation, treatment, monitoring and communication of risk, which has been used in educational contexts. In France, the National Observatory for Safety in Schools and Universities uses several methods to evaluate risks to schools from natural and technological disasters, such as a general schools safety survey (ESOPE) and hazard risk maps. In Korea, the issues of assessment of risk, regulatory enforcement and safety standards in schools has become a policy priority following the fatal fire in Chun An primary school last year.

Risk assessment has been successfully implemented in several educational contexts in a number of countries, but could a similar methodology feasibly and reliably be applied in an international context? It was concluded that *existing methodologies of risk assessment could be transferable to other institutions and countries*. However, further work needs to be conducted on “what works” using current methods – in both local and national contexts - before an agreed-upon international methodology with common definitions can be identified. However, problems of over-reporting, under-reporting and the influence of the “political element” must be taken into consideration. Community need should drive prioritisation of risk, and not the media.

Theme 2: Crisis planning and management

It is important to talk to students in planning and preparing for emergencies. This makes a difference. (Ben Tucker, United States)

Crises most often occur without warning and can either directly or indirectly affect the school environment. The events in New York on 11 September 2001, the school stabbings in Ikeda Elementary School in Japan in June 2001 and the explosion in a fertiliser factory in Toulouse in France in September 2001 are three shocking examples of such occurrences. Today, among other measures, in New York, school emergency plans are being revised to make provisions for citywide emergencies; while in Japan, a centre of research related to school crisis management has been established and a manual on measures for prevention of crime in school facilities is being prepared. In Spain, while security in schools is currently at an acceptable level, measures such as civil contingency plans for catastrophes and a victims’ attention programme can be swiftly implemented should a crisis occur. Following a recent earthquake in Athens in which more than 400 school buildings were damaged, the School Buildings Organisation (OSK) in the Ministry of Education in Greece created a special department for the management of crises, which is also responsible for establishing a legal framework of action.

Such accounts demonstrate how a single incident can radically influence national policy, but how can countries effectively learn from the experiences of other countries? When should students be kept inside a building and when should they be left outside? How can planning be effectively realised, on a school and national level? What are some hard-core and soft-core planning approaches? How do educators maintain a balance between “normal life” and keeping people safe? These questions need to be fully addressed in future meetings.

Theme 3: Infrastructure approaches to school safety

All schools need to have their boundaries defined in some way. Fences don’t need to be forbidding. (Chris Bissell, United Kingdom)

The incorporation of both passive and active security features in school building design, in both old and new buildings, is an important consideration for education ministries, school architects and for the students and teachers using the building. In Ireland, the Planning and Building Unit in the Ministry of Education is conducting a study to identify the current security requirements in schools. A number of stakeholders have been consulted and a variety of methodologies used (*e.g.*, Post-Occupancy Evaluation, security auditing) to assess the school's location and surroundings, site boundary, site layout, landscaping and lighting. In Greece, OSK has played a significant role in providing facilities and in developing educational programmes for students whose parents are economic migrants, for youth at risk (*e.g.*, AIDS, drugs and alcohol), and also for schools in seismically sensitive areas. In Mexico, the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) has implemented two federal schemes – Natural Disaster Fund (FONDEN) and the Preventive Natural Disaster Fund (FOPREDEN) – to provide support for educational buildings and their occupants in case of disaster.

Active discussion focused on a number of areas relating to the ownership and context of school design. The community plays a vital role and sets the context for much of school design. The insurance industry does not drive design solutions, although legal status does influence design, especially in the determination of public and private space. Passive design choices can enhance security, although some risks are too high and active design elements or relocation should be considered in some cases. There is also a clear role for the OECD in providing *a catalogue or clearinghouse of ideas and design solutions in context*.

Theme 4: Collaborative approaches to school safety and security

The work of this group... was a very moving experience. There is such a great weight of experience here to make schools safe. (Ike Ellis, Australia)

Many problems in schools that impact on students can often be effectively addressed by so-called collaborative or “comprehensive” approaches to school safety and security. Such approaches involve a comprehensive range of individuals or groups both inside and outside the school, a strategic plan and implementation of a range of programmes to promote safety. International institutes such as the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime based in Canada are working to consolidate research and knowledge about risk/protective factors, effective practices and cost effectiveness. The EC CONNECT initiative recently released a report on school violence and bullying in schools in 17 countries, which also indicates that a wide range of interventions to tackle school violence are being used across European countries, most of which lack rigorous evaluation. The Amsterdam School Safety project, which started in 1999, used a rational, collective and integrated approach to address the problems of violence in schools. Using survey instruments, teachers, students and experts worked together to identify counter and preventive measures, to formulate priorities, and to implement actions and measures to combat problems of bullying and violence in schools. In the United Kingdom, the “Safe Schools Initiative” is investigating the benefits of an integrated technology approach to reducing crime in two schools.

A wealth of programmes was presented during this session. The European VISIONARY project institutes from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom have created an international portal on violence in school. The “Together We Light the Way” project in Canada is a comprehensive school-based model that successfully intervenes to prevent antisocial behaviours, which is part of a national strategy to prevent bullying in Canadian schools. The Ministry of Education in Malaysia established a safe school programme in 2002 in response to an increase in the number of negative influences which threaten the teaching and learning process in schools. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is also conducting research on codes of practice on workplace violence in the education sector. The European Integrated Programme on Rehabilitation has also completed work in this area with students with special needs.

Given the great number and diversity of existing programmes designed to create safer schools throughout the world, ***there is a role for the OECD to provide a repository whereby countries can access and add to this existing knowledge and experience.*** In doing so, effective ingredients – including evaluation methods - in successful programmes can be identified. ***An OECD conference on school violence and bullying, organised by the OECD Education and Training Policy Division, the Ministry of Education and Research Norway and the University of Stavenger, will take place next year.***

Theme 5: Education, training and support approaches to school safety and security

The role of the school principal in taking responsibility for the implementation of these programmes [SESAM] is crucial. (School Principal, Collège Les Bouvets, France)

How well schools respond in times of crisis is largely dependent on the extent to which teachers and students have been prepared and trained for such an incident. Students and teachers must know evacuation procedures, they must know how to respond to different situations from both inside and outside the school, whether it be a school fire, an incident of bullying or a chemical spill in a nearby neighbourhood. Teachers must be trained to respond to a range of student behaviours that can occur before, after and during an incident that has threatened the safety of a school and its students.

International organisations such as the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and the European Federation of Networks of Scientific Co-operation (FER) are strong advocates of what is termed a “culture of risk”, which emphasises the important role of education in fostering awareness of types of risks, of how these risks can be prevented, and of the responsibility of each person involved. SESAM (School Emergency Standardised Answer in case of Major accident) is a crisis management tool for school principals in France. This important programme is implemented in schools by the French Institute of Trainers in Major Risks, in co-operation with the Council of Europe, the French Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development and the National Observatory for Safety in Schools and Universities. It has served as a model for the security plan (PPMS) that is used in all schools, and which was made compulsory in national education on 30 May 2002. In France, the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development supports a number of other programmes on major risk education. The “Prevention – First Gestures” programme, which is co-ordinated by the local fire and rescue services in the Grasse area in the south of France, educates adults and students about risk prevention. In Australia, a number of public bodies – such as Emergency Management Australia, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training and the New South Wales Police Force - collaborate to develop, implement and evaluate school safety plans and programmes, including training to improve personal safety of students and staff. In Armenia, the European Interregional Centre for Training Rescuers in Yerevan develops, implements and updates training courses and methodological materials for pupils, teaching staff, administrative executives and parents on safety issues, in addition to training pupils and youth to recognise and respond to emergencies, such as hostage situations.

The experiences recounted during this session highlighted the fact that regular and accredited training of teachers is essential, both in pre-service teacher training and in professional development and other training programmes (e.g., first aid). Training should be specific, direct and experiential, thus involving role-playing and subject-specific content (e.g., science teachers should receive general and specific training relevant to their field of expertise). Similarly, the curriculum should reflect general (e.g., how to evacuate the building in case of a fire) and specific safety issues (e.g., safety precautions in the science laboratory). While there is a role for national and local governments to oversee the development and implementation of such programmes in countries, the interest and enthusiasm of school principals, the availability of funding and the role of supportive legislation and regulation are the primary factors guiding the success of such programmes. ***There is a role for the OECD in working with such organisations as the Council of Europe to gather information on such programmes, and monitor their implementation in countries.***

Site visits

The experience of the conference was enriched by a half-day of site visits to schools located near La Défense. The visits were organised by Gérard Pourchet (*Inspecteur général de l'Éducation nationale*), Gérard Mignot (*Chargé de mission Sécurité, Inspection Académique des Hauts-de-Seine*), Monique Korezlioglu (ONS), Sylvette Pierron (*Délégation Académique à l'Action Culturelle (DAAC)*) and Claire Aribaud (ONS).

The first group visited the periphery of l'école maternelle Puteaux and then inside the Collège Les Bouvets, also located in Puteaux; while the other group travelled to the Lycée polyvalent F. et N. Léger in Argenteuil. The school principals and other staff discussed with participants the measures put in place to ensure the security of children in the school, including the implementation of the SESAM security plan against major risks, discussed above.

Outcomes

Well what are you [OECD] going to do now? (Ben Tucker, United States)

General outcomes

Four general outcomes of the meeting were identified in the course of the conference.

1. Power Point presentations of the main speakers – and some other presentations made during the working group sessions – will be published on the OECD School Safety and Security Web site at www.oecd.org/edu/schoolsafety. A report containing all conference papers will be published in English and French in early 2004.
2. A series of annual conferences on key school safety and security issues will be held with the support of the United States Department of Education.
3. An international literature review will be conducted on the key themes of this meeting.
4. The results of this conference will provide further input to OECD work on education and social cohesion, and also the school violence and bullying activity.

Future work

The overwhelming consensus among participants at this conference was that there is a need for further work by the OECD on all of the issues addressed at the meeting. Given the diversity of issues and approaches, a network approach should be adopted. To avoid duplication of work and to build more strategic networks, it is also important for the OECD to collaborate with other international bodies such as the Council of Europe and the International Center for the Prevention of Crime. There is also room for the development of horizontal work within the OECD, particularly with the OECD/ETP School Violence and Bullying activity.

Broad proposals for future work in this area are summarised below. Achieving these objectives will largely depend on the scale of human and financial resources available.

1. The establishment and development of *networks and related meetings* on different issues.
2. The investigation of the *feasibility of international data collection and the development of methodologies*.

3. The *collection, organisation and dissemination of case study data*. The School Safety and Security Web pages (www.oecd.org/edu/schoolsafety) will serve as a main dissemination tool.