



Be Safe and Sound **A Case-Study Evaluation of the Program** **Based on Experiences of Nine Pennsylvania Schools**

The National Crime Prevention Council during the period 2001-2003 developed the concept of coordinated, action-focused planning for school safety and security that is grounded in local action. This initiative, known as Be Safe and Sound (BSS), includes administrators, teachers, staff, community members, and parents (and students in upper grades) as active partners in identifying school needs, prioritizing actions, developing resources, and implementing solutions.

This report provides results of a nine-school evaluation conducted in a case study format with cross-site comparisons. The study examined the BSS model in the field under varying conditions, during the same time frame, with relative uniformity of educational setting (the same state), and relevant laws and regulations. Its goal was to provide a qualitatively grounded, formative evaluation that took advantage of the diversity of settings to provide guidance on future activities.

Site visits were conducted from May 1 through June 12, 2006. Data from NCPC records, including grant applications, site reports, program manager's file notes, and materials from sites were examined at NCPC's offices. The program manager was interviewed.



Be Safe and Sound is promising on a number of fronts, based on this cross-site case study evaluation.

- First, its localized planning is doable within a school year with modest training and technical assistance.
- Second, it performs as well as any with respect to parent involvement, with the typical pattern of stronger parent involvement in lower grades.
- Third, it brings community agencies and organizations into the partnership.
- Fourth, it helps to identify problems on a clearer and more objective footing.
- Fifth, it results in action addressing problems, with some sites already showing documented results.
- Sixth, it leverages and/or attracts resources.

These examples, drawn from schools in this study, help to highlight the potential of BSS:

- In a suburban elementary school, a parent led the program. Working with her were other parents, the principal, and a group of teachers, as well as school administrative and custodial staff. Be Safe and Sound planning highlighted the lack of private means of classroom-to-office or classroom-to-classroom communications. The walkie-talkies that had recently been purchased enabled the evacuation to be coordinated safely and quickly (5 minutes) following a bomb threat in spring 2006.
- Teachers and administrators in a Kindergarten-Grade 8 charter school for special needs children wanted help in nailing down problems and focusing on solutions. Be Safe and Sound teamwork showed that hallways, bathrooms, and the cafeteria were the key areas of concern. Incidents in the school dropped by more than 70 percent in the first six months that the solutions were implemented. Parents, staff, and students confirmed distinct improvements.
- A massive high school – about 900,000 square feet of building – faced fights in hallways, including confrontations during classes. The Be Safe and Sound team, which included students, determined that increased full-time observation was one necessary answer and that student, teacher, and staff ID badges were another. (Strangers had been involved in several incidents.) The team leveraged its resources while providing remarkable opportunities for students. Computer and graphics classes designed photo ID cards that the school can make locally. Audio-visual students and another group of computer students developed a camera system that provides real-time and recorded access to views of all key areas of the building and campus. Students report that their peers now stop each other from fighting because “those cameras are watching.” And the “camera team” of students has already been engaged by two other schools to install similar systems.
- Many teachers, parents, and administrators were unaware of it, but listening to students told the Be Safe and Sound team at a middle school that bullying was a pervasive and pernicious presence. It turned out that the problem wasn’t so much physical bullying as verbal and social abuse. The Be Safe and Sound team moved swiftly to develop a package of short-term and long-term programs to prevent bullying and emphasize positive behaviors and attitudes in the school. Students and faculty could see impact even in June 2006, and the long-term preventive program will be in place for the 2006-2007 school year.

These highlights demonstrate the potential of local partnerships to tailor school safety and security activities to the needs of their schools and to produce documented results.

Program Description and Brief History

The initial BSS program cycle generally encompasses two to three years, with needs assessment and planning in Year One; implementation of plans in Years One, Two, and Three; and continued implementation and major reassessment of conditions in Year

Three. From there, periodic reassessments and updated action steps take place in a two-to three-year cycle.

The BSS Tool Kit includes program planning guides, resources for those employing this program model, survey and analysis instruments for key audiences and for crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) analysis. It was developed in both print and CD formats, with the CD being the version of choice for field distribution. The kit was also made available online at NCPC’s web site www.ncpc.org/resources/files/pdf/school-safety/11964-School%20Safety%20Toolkit%20final.pdf .

The program was initially disseminated through presentations at national- and state-level conferences of a wide variety of organizations concerned with school safety issues. Workshops introducing the program as well as one-day trainings were offered. Participants were invited to register their programs with the national organization. This early effort resulted in high levels of expressed interest in the program, but mixed ability to identify those who actually had implemented the BSS model.

In the summer of 2004, the Allstate Insurance Foundation of Pennsylvania (a regional foundation) decided to help bring the program to that state in a structured way and with modest funds as start-up support. Up to ten schools would be provided with funds – \$500 toward initial planning and \$6,500 toward implementation of plans for a total of \$7,000 per school. In order to apply, each school had to have had at least one representative attend the day-long BSS training and had to have parents and community organizations cosign as agreeing to take part in the process. These schools were also required to agree to cooperate with any program evaluation. Initial funds were disseminated in late spring 2005, with the programs undertaking the seminal first-year activities during the 2005-2006 school year.

NCPC developed a review and selection process that culled 32 applications down to ten. The ten sites are listed below. These sites provided signed contracts with NCPC to complete the BSS process. Nine of the ten schools fully completed the process. The tenth, Easton High School, Easton, PA, returned its funds to the BSS program at the end of the 2005-2006 school year, stating that it could not, after all, undertake the project.

Table 1. Basic BSS Schools Facts

| School | Location | Grades Taught |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Central High School | Erie, PA | 9-12 (and Voc Ed for city) |
| Easton High School | Easton, PA | 9-12 |
| Eisenhower Middle School | Norristown, PA | 6-8 and K |
| Forbes Road Career/Tech Center | Pittsburgh, PA | High school vocational education |
| GECAC Charter School | Erie, PA | K - 8/special needs |
| Lehman Middle School | Bushkill, PA | 6-8 |
| Lincoln Middle School | Catasauqua, PA | 6-8 |
| Morningside Elementary School | Pittsburgh, PA | K-5 |
| Mount Carmel Area Jr.-Sr. High School | Mt. Carmel, PA | 7-12 |
| Northside Elementary School | Harrisburg, PA | K-6 |

Central High School in Erie encompasses over 800,000 square feet of space in a re-emergent Erie. Mt. Carmel Junior-Senior High School brings together students from half a dozen of Pennsylvania’s anthracite coal-mining communities. Lincoln Middle School is in a small town just a few miles from Allentown, along the busy I-78 corridor. Northside Elementary sits north and east of downtown Harrisburg in a “middle-aged” community with strong neighborhood support. Forbes Road Career/Tech Center brings together youth from more than a dozen different schools for less than half a day of classes in two shifts. Eisenhower Middle School, in an older Philadelphia suburb, still has many students walk to school, whereas Lehman Middle School in Dingman’s Ferry, at the north end of the Delaware Water Gap, buses or drives in every student. GECAC Charter School is dedicated to children in grades K-8 with special needs. Easton Area High School, which dropped out of the program and was not the subject of a case study, is reported to have problems with gangs, fighting, and other issues.

What these schools had in common is a process – Be Safe and Sound – and some independent resources (\$7,000 total) to improve school safety using that process.

The core question this study seeks to answer is “What effect has Be Safe and Sound had on each of these schools?” Along with that issue is the question of the extent to which the program was faithfully implemented. Where the program was not faithfully implemented, do the issues appear to be external to the program, or are there adaptations that can retain key program features but offer a greater opportunity for success?

Overview of Findings

The nine schools found BSS beneficial in varying degrees. Six completed plans reasonably within the guidelines of the BSS model, with modest local variations. The other three are either in various degrees of completion or encountered unusual obstacles.

Completion Status

One concern was whether the BSS planning process would prove too onerous for a school to complete in one school year. The table below presents the planning status for each of the nine schools that undertook the program.

Table 2. BSS Plan Completion Status

| School | Completion/Issues |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Central High School | Identified problem areas and solutions, adhering to key plan elements. Action under way or complete on more than half of strategies for solution. |
| Eisenhower Middle School | Planning almost completed; delayed by staff change-over, but staff commitment was enhanced by new staff taking ownership of program. |
| Forbes Road Career/Tech Center | Complex school structure nearly devoid of community made planning with BSS model difficult, but a plan was developed. |
| GECAC Charter School | A plan was developed; prioritized areas were addressed; demonstrable drop in problems of greatest concern. |
| Lehman Middle School | Problem assessment and planning completed with plans to move forward over the summer in the two major program areas. |
| Lincoln Middle School | Problem assessment, planning, and several program elements for correction of priority problem (bullying) already under way. |

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| Morningside Elementary School | This school, whose BSS program was run by a community group, found out in October that it was being closed. The community group and school, however, continued to address safety and security issues. |
| Mount Carmel Area Jr.-Sr. High School | The school has completed initial planning and is bringing in the Teens, Crime, and the Community program as well as several focused events to help address identified problems. |
| Northside Elementary School | Though a new principal asked that the program start-up be postponed until she could review the program, she became a stalwart sponsor. Extensive problem identification and action on several major problems have been completed in the first year. |

These findings demonstrate that the BSS model’s assessment and planning expectations are reasonable for a diverse group of schools in varied settings and with a range of student age groups. It is important to recognize that there was both formal focus on the program (the principal had to sign the agreement) and modest funding for the start-up. These may have given extra impetus to the planning process.

In at least four of the schools, the actual problems (or their extent) – based on physical surveys of school grounds and surveys of students, teachers, and parents – surprised the group managing BSS. The degree of bullying or intimidation, of hallway and bathroom encounters, and of thefts were surprises in several of these schools. This finding illustrates the need for and utility of a true and ongoing assessment of the school’s physical environment accompanied by assessment of both school and neighborhood climate issues. Assumption can readily lead to poor planning.

In one school, Forbes Road, there is little or no sense of student community, because students from more than a dozen schools are transported to the school for half-day sessions, during which they are almost exclusively located in their own vocational centers within the school. Student and parent loyalty and involvement are focused on the student’s “home” school rather than the training facility. Parents infrequently attend presentation of certificates – the school’s equivalent of graduation. One lesson from the effort at Forbes is that although BSS can strengthen community, it is not the platform to employ to create community where none exists. The school’s management committee worked on how BSS could help identify problems and provide corrective measures for existing problems; several strategies emerged from their work to address physical security needs.

Parent Involvement

Involvement of parents and community organizations as active resources in the school has always been a goal of the BSS program. Though almost every school had reasonable to excellent community involvement, parent involvement, especially in the secondary grades, was a major challenge for most schools. In looking at the BSS impact on this area, it is important to note that a U.S. Department of Education task force is currently looking at precisely the problem BSS encountered – encouraging parent involvement in secondary schools, especially high schools.

Overall the BSS program did well in the nine schools. This table summarizes parent involvement; it is derived both from direct interviews and reporting

Table 3. Parent Involvement in BSS

| School | Parent Involvement |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Central High School | Five parents attended the community forum; three remained involved. |
| Eisenhower Middle School | Two parents, both of whom actively volunteer in other aspects of school life, have been involved in BSS. |
| Forbes Road Career/Tech Center | Parent involvement at this unique complex is non-existent except where it is mandatory (e.g., serious discipline or truancy issues). |
| GECAC Charter School | As a charter school, GECAC requires that parents donate at least 15 hours a semester in time in the school. Two parent volunteers were active in BSS. |
| Lehman Middle School | In this commuter community, parent involvement has been a challenge. Nonetheless two parents were active in BSS. |
| Lincoln Middle School | Three parents were active in ongoing BSS activities, including helping to develop community connections to support BSS programs. |
| Morningside Elementary School | At least two parents were active in this community-organization-led group, even though the school was closing. The community group addressed an immediate safety problem as well as the issue of safe travel from the neighborhood to the new school. |
| Mount Carmel Area Jr.-Sr. High School | Several parents at this rural school were involved in BSS planning. Some parents were themselves graduates of this school. |
| Northside Elementary School | The BSS program at this site was actually managed by a parent volunteer, with support from half a dozen or more other parents. |

Parent involvement can be a powerful force to expand the work that should be done but is not staffed. Parents in elementary and middle school grades generally were more receptive to volunteering than were those in high schools, which is the typical parent breakdown for involvement as children advance in grades.

In interviews, it became apparent that some additional suggestions or “task descriptions” might help those implementing the program develop ways to recruit more parents. Parents who commute more than two hours (as some did at Lehman Middle School) might take on tasks that can be performed on weekends, for example, or research that can be done after dinner. Parents with several children might get together to work on a time-specific task if child care is arranged with parents or older teens providing that help.

NCPC needs to monitor closely the national-level efforts under way, including those of the U.S. Department of Education, to identify ways to increase parent involvement, especially as it applies to secondary schools. It was these schools that were most likely to encounter problems with parent involvement.

Community Partnerships

In addition to parent involvement, the BSS approach calls for involvement of community agencies and organizations. The local law enforcement agency is considered a “must”; such local agencies as victim services, counseling, and school boards were involved,

among others. Local organizations involved ranged from civic and fraternal groups to parent-teacher groups to local businesses. By and large, those schools that were able to get their planning started reasonably promptly were also able to cite a solid range of local partners.

Table 4. Local Partners in BSS

| School | Local Partnerships |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Central High School | This school turned its student vocational classes into partners. The audio-visual students provided additional video camera systems and significantly improved monitoring. The computer graphics students designed and perfected an in-house process for creating and updating student, teacher, and staff photo ID cards. The local school police agency was strongly supportive. Local restaurants donated food to the community forum. |
| Eisenhower Middle School | This school's delay in initiating planning has limited its outreach to local partners. But the local police, the school's Be Safe and Sound Committee members, and the administration are moving toward that step. |
| Forbes Road Career/Tech Center | Forbes Road has had to build a sense of community on its own campus, and administrators are striving to do so. The wide-open campus presents a number of challenges, not the least of which is the multiple schools and school districts that the school serves. |
| GECAC Charter School | GECAC (Greater Erie Community Action Council) is the parent organization for this school. Its long (more than 35 years) history in the community means that it offers innumerable partnership links to the school, including the police department, local business leaders, and local elected officials. |
| Lehman Middle School | Lehman has drawn on the Pennsylvania State Police who are assigned as SROs to the school, on the school board's grant writing capacity, and on local emergency management agencies in its initial safety focus – emergency/crisis management at this very remote location with limited access. |
| Lincoln Middle School | Located in a small town, this school has benefited from civic and fraternal groups, church groups, parent involvement, fund-raisers, and partnerships with police, the local victim service agency, and with school board staff, among others, to address its number one problem, verbal bullying and harassment. The anti-bullying effort is being extended downward to the community's elementary schools as a further preventive measure. |
| Morningside Elementary School | A major safety threat is that the bank branch immediately across from the school's entrance had been robbed at least three times in two years. Bank officials formed a positive, constructive partnership with BSS that embraced both the school and the church-run preschool at another corner of the intersection to enhance safety. A state senator's office, state transportation officials, and local transportation officials were integral partners in a move to increase walking safety to the new school that Morningside students would attend. |
| Mount Carmel Area Jr.-Sr. High School | Mount Carmel has a close relationship with the town's police force, which has proved a significant asset. The school district superintendent has been a strong supporter of the BSS initiative. The school enlisted its statistics class to tally and report on survey results. Peer mediation training was brought in with local support, as was the SODA anti-drunk-driving program. |

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| Northside Elementary School | The school has enlisted parents with specific forms of expertise in such areas as security, as well as those willing to take on research tasks. The local police force has proved helpful, particularly Officer Stoner, who works with Northside. Dauphin County Tech has provided help with enhanced video camera surveillance of parking areas. School staff took on redesign of the lobby to improve visibility from the school office. The local Neighborhood Watch is much more aware and involved in the school. |
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Each of these schools expanded and/or strengthened ties with community agencies and groups. They discovered new or more flexible resources, and the resources actually were engaged to resolve problems, not just as cheering sections or pro forma allies.

Such productive outreach encourages and validates the use of school/community partnerships not just in special cases but in routine school operation. There is no question that a substantial majority of these schools believe that they received significant benefit from their connections to community.

Identifying and Addressing Problems

At its heart, BSS is designed to make schools and those who learn and work in them safer. In order to achieve this goal, it is vital that the people working on this effort have a means of documenting the problems. The BSS Tool Kit contains two sets of instruments for doing so. One, a physical safety and security scan, examines problems with security from the school grounds and addresses entry/exit control for the school building. The other set provides ways for students, teachers, staff, and parents to express their thoughts, concerns, and experiences in and around the school with respect to fear and crime.

BSS schools in Pennsylvania used both sets of instruments to help them diagnose and document problems and set priorities for action. The table below relates the use of BSS tools to identify school problems.

Table 5. Identifying and Addressing Problems

| School | Problem Identification |
|--------------------------|---|
| Central High School | Student concern over strangers in hallways of this extremely large school building and about fights that sprung up during “passing periods” were among the major concerns among students, coupled with concern over theft of personal property. Installation of extended audio-visual surveillance, development of photo ID cards, and improved online storage of surveillance have all contributed, according to students, parents, and staff, to an increased sense of safety and security. |
| Eisenhower Middle School | Eisenhower’s BSS committee used the surveys to identify theft and incidents during passing periods as areas of major concern to students and staff alike. Action to address these problems was in the planning stages at the time of the site visit; turnover at the senior administrative level delayed program start-up. |

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| Forbes Road Career/Tech Center | The school was able to identify a major problem area immediately based on its own data – arguments and even fights among students as buses dropped off one group and picked up another during the mid-school-day changeover. A second issue was the need to expand coverage of the huge site by video cameras. School officials report reduced problems and improved security resulting from supplemental on-site security staff and installation of added cameras thanks to BSS funds. |
| GECAC Charter School | GECAC found that three major areas presented problems to students – at magnitudes that exceeded staff and parent expectations. Lavatory areas, the lunchroom area, and hallways during “passing periods” were seen as major areas of concern by students. The parent surveys received supported these responses. Plans were quickly developed and incidents were reduced by 75 percent or more in the January-June 2006 period. |
| Lehman Middle School | Bus safety and lunchroom issues cropped up in Lehman’s survey of students. The principal and school staff recognized the vulnerability of the school (isolated, winter-dangerous two lane mountain road that is more than 15 miles from the nearest police station and at least five miles from the nearest fire/ambulance service. The school had, at the time of the site visit, developed an emergency planning coordination committee and planning process, with two drills to be held (one in August 2006 without students present and one in October 2006 with students present.) |
| Lincoln Middle School | Lincoln’s BSS committee used the student, staff, and parent surveys and found out that the issue of verbal bullying was far and away the major concern of its young people. Its pervasiveness was so strong that program design quickly reached down into the elementary grades to help provide a truly preventive long-term approach. Community and parent education was incorporated to help adults understand the harm being caused and show them positive ways to support the bullying prevention initiative. The Olweus Bullying Prevention program is being introduced this fall. |
| Morningside Elementary School | Morningside’s major problem was that its closure (announced in October) precluded much work toward improvement of the school building. But analysis of local problems by the community sponsor demonstrated that the fear and potential danger from bank robberies literally across the street were a hazard, as was the proposed set of unsafe walking routes children would travel to their new school. By June, a number of anti-robbery strategies were in place at the bank, together with a lock-down notification to the school. Action was well under way to make necessary safety improvements in walking routes or alternatively to provide bus service from the community to the new school site. |

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| Mount Carmel Area Jr.-Sr. High School | Based on its work with local police, school-based officers, and use of surveys with parents, staff, and students (including elementary-age students), the high school identified stealing (theft of personal property) and drug use as persistent problems. Parents are active in the school, coordinating a number of extracurricular programs. Graffiti and vandalism have been problems in the halls. The BSS grant funds helped pay for a student-painted mural that has eliminated graffiti in the hallways. Diversity issues revealed in surveys and other findings are being addressed through integrating diversity appreciation elements throughout the curriculum. The school is bringing Teens, Crime, and the Community into its curriculum to help students better understand the impact of crime and their power to prevent it. |
| Northside Elementary School | Student and staff surveys turned up a number of concerns. Among the most urgent were the lack of access control at the side parking lot, which had already resulted in one crime; the need for better visibility from the school office to the entryway; and the need for more secure communication than the old-fashioned "squawk-box" PA system. The video system needed upgrading so it would provide a history, not just real-time monitoring, of areas under surveillance. These priorities were addressed within the first year and were resolved by the end of summer 2006, using BSS and other funding sources. The extremely quick (5-minute) evacuation of the school during a bomb threat in spring 2006 was directly attributed to the improved communications system. |

At each school, the BSS surveys played important roles in uncovering concerns among students. In many cases, it highlighted problems (or severity of problems) that were not known to the BSS committee or other school staff.

There was somewhat less reliance on the crime prevention through environmental design survey, a finding that needs to be addressed in revising the BSS Tool Kit. Additional background on the value and application of the survey may prove useful. The survey set of tools was seen as highly valuable. Some individuals made suggestions about survey improvement, including off-site processing and age-appropriate questionnaires for lower elementary grades. These should also be addressed in Tool Kit revision.

Uses of Grant Funds

This particular manifestation of Be Safe and Sound provided funding, thanks to the Allstate Foundation of Pennsylvania, to each of the selected sites. As previously noted, a \$500 initial stipend was provided for expenses incurred during the planning phase. When an acceptable plan was submitted, with a budget for expenditure of the \$6,000 in funds, those funds were released under appropriate accountability procedures.

Table 6. Uses of Grant Funds

| School | Problem Identification |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Central High School | Central High put the grant funds to work in providing for meeting and forum materials, refreshments, and supplies. It also used funds to support the necessary expenses for equipment used to create the identity card and camera systems. |
| Eisenhower Middle School | Eisenhower Middle School, as noted, was delayed in developing its Be Safe and Sound plan. Current expenditures have included support for meetings of the team, administration of the survey to students, faculty, and parents. The team will submit its plan as quickly as possible with proposed funding. |
| Forbes Road Career/Tech Center | School officials report reduced problems and improved security resulting from supplemental on-site security staff and installation of added cameras thanks to BSS funds. |
| GECAC Charter School | GECAC spent the bulk of its funds on meeting and mail-out (parent surveys); on a series of character education items that support a respectful, nonviolent school climate; and on added surveillance capacity for areas of the building difficult to oversee. |
| Lehman Middle School | Bus safety and lunchroom issues cropped up in Lehman's survey of students. The principal and school staff recognized the vulnerability of the school (isolated, winter-dangerous two lane mountain road that is more than 15 miles from the nearest police station and at least five miles from the nearest fire/ambulance service). The school had, at the time of the site visit, developed an emergency planning coordination committee and planning process, with two drills to be held (one in August 2006 without students present and one in October 2006 with students present.) |
| Lincoln Middle School | Lincoln's BSS committee used its funds to administer the surveys, provide materials for educating and informing the team, bringing in a speaker to set the tone for an anti-bullying effort in a community and a school forum, and engaging the community in support of the program. It also funded workshops in the 6 th grade (the school's entry grade). |
| Morningside Elementary School | Morningside's major problem was that its closure (announced in October) precluded much work toward improvement of the school building. But the Be Safe and Sound Team used its funds to support materials and meeting costs for the team and for a forum, which provided an extensive and helpful notebook to participants, and for costs connected with documenting and securing state resolution of serious problems with walking routes from the Morningside neighborhood to the Sunnyside School, to which Morningside's students were to move in September 2005. |
| Mount Carmel Area Jr.-Sr. High School | The BSS grant funds helped pay meeting costs, survey administration costs, and a student-painted mural that has eliminated graffiti in the hallways. Diversity issues revealed in surveys and other findings are being addressed through integrating diversity appreciation elements throughout the curriculum. The school is bringing Teens, Crime, and the Community into its curriculum to help students better understand the impact of crime and their power to prevent it. |
| Northside Elementary School | In addition to meeting, survey, and forum costs, Northside paid for walkie-talkies to provide direct classroom communication and is funding a "swipe card" system for its side entrance, to strengthen access control |

It was clear in the site visits that the school teams had found many ways in which the safety and security of their schools could be improved. Indeed, most were eager to hear of any new sources of funding for which they might apply. A number expressed the hope that Year Two Be Safe and Sound grants might be available.

There is no question that some level of start-up money can be a key to early success. Many schools must budget far in advance and in some cases could not possibly have paid for certain expenses. The sites expended their planning money within the planning period and most indicated that some added expenses were incurred, though many met these costs through in-kind donations and local funding sources.

Projects developed through the Be Safe and Sound plan appeared from all evidence of information and observation to be reasonably related to the issues most directly challenging the school. At Morningside, which was closing, the focus shifted to safe walking routes to the school to which students were transferred. At Lincoln, the bullying issue rather than any building needs was wisely targeted, given that the building was being vacated in a few months. Forbes Road looked hard at its most immediate needs for student safety and met them by restoring a part-time security guard position that had been eliminated and providing some additional surveillance of the widely spaced campus area.

The core of the funding issue is whether \$6,500 in project money is adequate, inadequate, or excessive for Be Safe and Sound schools. One can argue in favor of some start-up funding on the basis that it meets initial needs and offers at least some support for initial “small successes” that help build the group’s viability. On the other hand, a vital question is whether Be Safe and Sound should be the source of project funds, rather than several extant programs to improve school security and safety that are already funded at federal, state, and local levels. One option is to consider a matching grant system with Be Safe and Sound matching \$1 for every \$2 raised locally. It is of great concern, though, that with the more than 15,000 schools in this nation, the program proposes to provide \$6,500 to every school that undertakes the process. Exploring eligibility of Be Safe and Sound projects for government funding that is directed at school safety makes sense.

Study Methodology and Related Caveats

This study represents nine schools encompassing varying settings and levels of instruction. These obviously do not address all the conditions and situations encountered in the schools of the United States. But the results are surprisingly consistent nonetheless.

The schools’ program cycles have not extended sufficiently long (through the end of Year Two) to document reductions in crimes and increases in safety, though, as noted, one or two schools have already been able to do so.

The program model in this study involved modest (\$7,000) grants to each of the schools. The schools who addressed this said that the ability to cover such expenses as food for community gatherings, special program materials, and physical security devices was

among the most helpful attributes of these small grants. Whether Be Safe and Sound should recommend some level of “start-up” budget needs to be considered as the program moves forward.

The following case studies are provided to offer a brief glimpse of the sites individually. The assessments made in the evaluation are reported above.

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Case Studies

These brief profiles of each of the sites are listed in alphabetical order by school name. The table below reflects that listing.

| School | Location |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Central High School | Erie, PA |
| Eisenhower Middle School | Norristown, PA |
| Forbes Road Career/Tech Center | Pittsburgh, PA |
| GECAC Charter School | Erie, PA |
| Lehman Middle School | Bushkill, PA |
| Lincoln Middle School | Catasauqua, PA |
| Morningside Elementary School | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Mount Carmel Area Jr.-Sr. High School | Mt. Carmel, PA |
| Northside Elementary School | Harrisburg, PA |

Central High School, Erie, PA

Setting

Erie is by all appearances a recovering Rust Belt city that has begun to revive its downtown area. Its economic past is all too apparent in the still-vacant buildings in the downtown area, but a number of new projects along the waterfront and nearby areas are rising.

Central High School, which sits about 1.5 miles south of the downtown area, is a massive building, covering approximately 900,000 square feet and about two long city blocks. It houses both regular high school classes and vocational training. Its design, straight wings forming bays off a long, straight front corridor, makes observation and detection problematic. The mix of regular and vocational students means that students may not even know whether another person their age “belongs” or is an intruder.

Using the Be Safe and Sound Program

Central High formed a team that included school police, senior administrators, teachers, parents, district staff, local emergency service providers, and students. The needs assessment found that theft; unsafe areas and times of day; and disrespect of students toward peers, teachers, administrators and parents were the major problems. Disrespect was seen as the catalyst for many of the other issues.

Based on the work of the team and the input of the community forum, which engaged in lively discussions and sharing of viewpoints, three objectives were developed. These included increased surveillance via video camera to reduce theft and misbehavior, dissemination or review to various audiences of safety information and procedures, and increase civility through training from the Erie Chamber of Growth Partnership. A fourth item – photo IDs for students, faculty, and staff – was added, because strangers had been involved in a number of incidents.

Like many other secondary schools, Central’s team was dismayed that more parents did not attend the forum. The group’s discussions were described as lively and enlightening, with all who did attend leaving with a better understanding of each other’s views.

Central’s strategy to meet these needs was highly innovative. When it was clear that grants for camera installations would not be quickly available, the school turned to its vocational students. They wrote software programs to record the cameras’ output digitally, designed a platform for system administrators to be able to dial up any camera on their desktop computer screens, either in current mode or for any of the eight days prior, and installed the system. Be Safe and Sound funds helped purchase the hardware that was otherwise unavailable. A system that could easily have cost the school tens of thousands of dollars was installed for a small fraction of that cost, and students gained valuable experience. In fact, two other schools have contracted to have the Central High crew install similar systems for them.

Likewise, Central asked its graphics and computer students to develop photo ID cards that the school could produce with its own resources. Students created and perfected a color-coded design and developed a user-friendly operating program that one administrator termed “practically foolproof.”

The students are proud of their work. The “camera crew” is looking to increase online storage and the number of views that are available to those monitoring the system. The group that developed the identity badges insisted on redoing the card’s graphics until it met their exacting standards.

Personal safety and other information have been provided in a variety of ways throughout the school – posted rules, brochures with information, video announcements, and the like. A new emergency procedures manual with quick-reference guides has been distributed to all appropriate personnel. The school system is interested in replicating the top-bound, indexed design that makes the new layout user-friendly in emergencies. The civility training is expected to get under way in the fall of 2006. This training is being provided at no charge by a local organization.

The Be Safe and Sound team believes that its work and that of its partners has significantly changed the school’s climate already. Two student team members reported that classmates discourage each other from fighting or other misbehavior with statements like “Those darn cameras are watching; stop it.” The rules information being posted makes it easier to remember them and get them enforced. Photo ID badges, according to

the students, will be a welcome addition. Students are proud that their colleagues produced key systems to improve safety.

Challenges and Benefits

As with many areas, the Erie School District has found itself diverting money to No Child Left Behind goals, which means that money for security is less available. Ways to engage parents effectively would be most welcome. In the future, the team would like to get more student organizations involved in the planning and execution of school safety and security measures and to get grants to cover teacher release so that more of them could be actively involved.

But the benefits of the program are considerable in Central's eyes. The team forged a different kind of partnership than its members had previously had with each other, because they were focused on a common, school-wide goal rather than on immediate problem-solving and short-term fixes. Parents, staff, and students who did get involved were actively involved. The planning process helped build understanding of and among the various groups within the school and helped to set priorities that were broadly supported.

Eisenhower Middle School, Norristown, PA

Setting

Eisenhower Middle School occupies an older (circa 1900) school building perhaps a mile from the downtown area of Norristown, on a major highway. Many, if not most, of the students walk to school.

The neighborhood, mostly single-family older homes, is a mix of ethnicities, races, and incomes. It produces a diverse group of students. Many of the families are either two-wage-earner or single-parent households.

Using the Be Safe and Sound Program

The key staff person for the Eisenhower Be Safe and Sound program left the school between the grant award and the program start-up. Her replacement arrived after the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year, and as the person in charge of disciplinary issues needed to get an immediate hand on those before reviewing and making decisions on the new program.

But nonetheless, by March 2006 a team had been brought together, survey results had been tallied, and a community forum convened. Survey results were shared; key findings included the fact that both students and teachers felt the least safe in the building after school hours, and that student disrespect toward other students and staff was a problem. Other issues that surfaced in the survey included student behavior with respect to neighboring home owners and those on walking routes, fighting, stealing, and bullying.

The forum participants developed solution statements for various problems using small group processes.

At the time of the site visit, the Be Safe and Sound team was moving to develop an action plan based on these survey and forum findings.

The school and the team have already integrated resource materials into ongoing safety and prevention education activities and found the materials very helpful.

It is important to point out that this school was described to the evaluator during the site visit as being “total chaos” during the prior school year, and that the new staff brought in was directed to move immediately on corrective actions. Among the approaches initiated has been a “Caught You Being Good” assembly – an exciting interactive speaker presentation that talks about themes from Othello in modern terms using laser light shows. On that same day, students with good performance records were treated to a barbecue lunch with the faculty and staff serving them in the school’s courtyard.

During the site visit, team members noted that they were planning to move ahead and submit an expenditure budget before the end of June for their \$6,500 action grant funds. They are pleased with the program and with the results of positive initiatives to date and feel that continuation of progress during the coming school year will make an even greater positive difference.

Organizations already being solicited for partnerships include the Norristown Borough, Wal-Mart, Target, Chick-fil-A, the community center, the Police Athletic League, churches, the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, auto dealerships, grocery stores, and real estate companies.

One of the parents observed that Eisenhower has gained a bad reputation in large part due to problem children who have moved on; in addition, other schools boast about successes. Eisenhower has had them but has not boasted about them. He believes this will change as Be Safe and Sound and other programs move forward.

Challenges and Benefits

The biggest challenge facing the program is the staff turnover coupled with direction to staff to act immediately to gain control of the school and its climate.

A benefit of the program is that it has produced sound data already, coupled with thoughtful solution statements, to address the school’s ongoing challenges.

Forbes Road Career/Technical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

Setting

The Forbes Road complex sits on a large campus slightly southwest of the city of Pittsburgh. It is the regional center for vocational and career training for more than a dozen high schools throughout the eastern portion of Allegheny County. Students are

bused to the site in two waves for half-day training. The last student typically leaves the campus no later than 1:30 p.m.

The school consists of two large one-story buildings divided into various training areas (e.g., auto shop, electronics, cosmetology) with an academic wing that accommodates students who may need only one or two courses to graduate. These buildings are set on an open campus with a large area around each building.

Using the Be Safe and Sound Program

The school staff acknowledges that in retrospect, Be Safe and Sound was probably not a good fit for this highly untraditional school campus. The program assumes some level of school community and of community engagement in the school; Forbes Road does not have these features because its students and their parents, with very few exceptions, see their “home” schools as the ones that are their school communities.

Forbes Road is simply the training site for students’ chosen subjects. It has no intramural or interschool competitive teams or clubs; the overwhelming majority of youth attending the school are there for three and one half hours in one vocational training area and then return to their home school sites. Though it communicates with parents through postcards, newsletters, and automated telephone dial-ups, parents tend to focus their energies also on students’ home schools. Part of the difficulty of involving parents is that some of the schools are more than a 30-minute drive from the Forbes Road campus, which means parents may face 45- to 50-minute drives each way to attend an evening meeting.

Nonetheless, Forbes Road recognizes and is seeking to build community, realizing that physical security can prevent only a limited range of crimes. Positive school climate is a vital element. Some steps have been taken to provide common experiences, to highlight student achievement with a Forbes career training focus, and to bring more parents to the school’s equivalent of graduation ceremonies – presentation of certificates of completion in various training curricula. Future Business Leaders of America has recently been brought to the campus.

The school’s safety committee did examine the campus security situation and highlighted the issue of ongoing conflict during the exchange period (when the later group arrives on buses and the earlier group boards them for return to their home schools) and to a lesser extent at the beginning and end of the school day.

The use of an online survey did result in some parent input in the survey process. Students indicated in their survey responses that fighting between groups from various schools was a major concern. There is some concern over thefts of small items such as electronic gear and cell phones. Though these items are banned, students bring them onto the campus nonetheless (a complaint heard from several secondary schools during this study).

Two areas that emerged for Be Safe and Sound support were the restoration of a part-time security officer who is present to monitor the interchange of students in the mid-morning bus runs and the augmentation of the closed circuit television system to permit more complete observation of the campus buildings through computers by administrative staff. These two changes, according to staff members, have helped to reduce thefts, to provide better security for such large items as vehicles awaiting auto shop repairs, and to reduce fighting.

Challenges and Benefits

Be Safe and Sound highlighted the school's lack of community, a problem of which administrators were well aware. Because of that lack, it was not possible to pull together a widely based team for the program.

However, the program did provide support for polling students, staff, and parents about conditions, which has proved helpful and it has provided the means to beef up two areas of security to help reduce property and violent crime.

GECAC Charter School, Erie, PA

Setting

The city of Erie is undergoing at least some signs of renaissance after a long economic downturn as its major manufacturing and other industrial facilities closed or relocated not simply out of downtown but entirely out of the area. The core of the downtown area seems active, but there are still abandoned buildings and other signs of a less-than-positive economic situation.

The GECAC K-8 charter school (320 students), which operates under the auspices of the Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC), is located about a mile east of the center of town, just a few blocks from the shore of Lake Erie. The one-story building was adapted from the offices of a paper mill that had closed its plant. At the time of the evaluation, all grades and the administrative staff were housed in this facility, but the upper grades (6-8) were to be moved in the summer of 2006 to a different location to provide more space for all grade levels.

GECAC traces its history to the War on Poverty in the middle and late 1960s. Still an active force in the community, the organization undertook to run a charter school to meet the special educational needs of many children who are deemed educationally "at risk." The school operates under a typical charter arrangement with the city's school structure.

Using the Be Safe and Sound Program

Because of the varying needs of the students it serves, the Charter School staff includes a number of specialized staff, ranging from behavior modification specialists to remedial instruction experts. But because these are children first and special needs children second, the school experiences many of the routine problems any school might face.

Be Safe and Sound was brought into the school as a means to improve the whole school's safety climate. When the program was started, behavior referrals were as high as 100 per month and the intensive supervision room had as many as 14 referrals a day. The adults seeking to help these children – teachers and special services providers alike – were clear that the climate in the school was its biggest obstacle to helping individual children succeed.

The Be Safe and Sound team included teachers, administrators, parents, the GECAC safety director, several specialists, a police department representative, the school's chief custodian (who is widely respected and trusted throughout the building), and student representatives.

The surveys of students through Be Safe and Sound produced very clear guidance about what was important to the students in feeling safe. Though the school had policies in place with respect to the commonly troublesome areas and times (hallway "passing" times, cafeteria time, and bathroom use), GECAC students definitely found these times and areas to be the source of problems. Many of the problems reflected bullying and a variety of misbehaviors between students.

The team took these findings seriously and outlined four specific objectives: reduce bullying and vandalism in the school bathroom; reduce bullying, fighting, and disrespect in the hallways during transition time; reduce bullying, fighting, and disrespect in the lunchroom and alternative rooms (e.g., intensive supervision); and take active measures to secure school supplies and staff personal belongings. Each objective was supported by specific, concrete activities.

As the team moved forward, involving various personnel as needed, it sought to explain its actions to all concerned and to garner wide support. It also carefully apportioned Be Safe and Sound funds to address each of the objectives. Expenditures ranged from simple locks and cabinets to convex observation mirrors and a four-camera surveillance system for some specific problem areas to character development materials that stress respect, trustworthiness, responsibility, and similar concepts toward helping children change their points of view and their behaviors.

Be Safe and Sound money also supported training for these character development initiatives to help ensure that teachers got maximum benefit from the materials. Additional activities included working with staff to ensure that policies about monitoring of problem areas and times were followed or were reworked to be feasible, then followed.

Did this work pay off? GECAC Charter School staff documented a dramatic decrease in disciplinary referrals during the January-June 2006 period, when the program was fully under way. From the January baseline, disciplinary referrals were cut dramatically. Referrals involving bathroom areas dropped from 2.7 per day in January to 0.56 per day in May. Lunchroom referrals fell from 2.4 per day to 0.5 per day. Transition time referrals fell from 1.6 per day to 0.31 per day.

Challenges and Benefits

GECAC Charter School administrative staff experienced unusual turnover during the Be Safe and Sound project period (June 2005 to June 2006), and the parent organization also experienced some turnover. These were disruptive at times in moving objectives forward. In moving the upper grades to a new building, GECAC expects to turn to the Be Safe and Sound process to assess experiences and security needs at this new site.

Benefits included the framework provided by the process, the opportunity to engage a diverse team in safety and security issues, which proved informative to all participants, and, most important, the fact of a demonstrably safer school climate for the young people seeking an education.

Lehman Intermediate School, Dingman's Ferry, PA

Setting

Lehman Middle School is located within a ten-minute drive (if the roads are good) of the scenic Delaware Water Gap, in the northern Pocono Mountains area in the far northeast section of Pennsylvania.

The school is part of a K-12 complex that is isolated from emergency and public safety services because it sits on a two-lane winding road that is subject to bad weather, obstruction, and other problems. Headquarters for its school district, East Stroudsburg, is more than 20 miles away. The nearest police station (Pennsylvania State Trooper Barracks) is more than 30 miles away, and the closest EMS and fire services are more than 5 miles away. This setting is at the heart of the school's biggest security challenge.

Using the Be Safe and Sound Program

In establishing the Be Safe and Sound Program, Lehman was able to bring together a wide-ranging team to help it develop emergency plans that take into account its isolation. These included state and local emergency planners, the State Police, parent volunteers, the School Resource Officer, emergency fire and medical services staffs, and school safety staff, as well as district officials.

A key concern had been planning for various emergency scenarios that the school, and the co-located High School North, might encounter – from severe inclement weather to accidents or other obstructions of the road to the school to bomb threats to violence in the school building.

As the team developed a full range of emergency plan considerations, it focused on conducting two drills to test the planning and familiarize staff and faculty (as well as students) with the process. Two mock-emergency drills were planned – one for August, before students arrived on campus for the school year, and one for October, when school would be in full swing. The group looked at variety of events including three evacuation scenarios, a three car crash that blocked the roadway with students in buses stranded there, a bomb threat, and the use of a car bomb during heavy traffic times at the school site. Plans were developed to address all these possibilities.

The remarkable communication among all parties, who previously had not even talked, for the most part, is considered by all to be a major achievement.

Meanwhile, the team conducted the Be Safe and Sound surveys and highlighted several security areas that needed remediation. One problem addressed was control over the locker and shower areas of the gym facilities (addressed by using a remotely observed camera for a hallway that led outside), which freed the gym teachers to supervise the locker room area. Another was to adopt the Teens, Crime, and the Community curriculum as a progressive activity for all three grades (6th -9th) at Lehman. This novel approach to administering this program was seen as a means of building the crime prevention issues into ongoing curriculum and providing reinforcement by making it a consistent part of the education year.

Because of its isolated geography and the sizable number of commuters to the greater New York area, which means a 2-hour-plus commute, the team determined that a community forum would not be effective at this time. Instead, the school's principal developed a means of reaching out to parents. When student participants in concerts, plays, and the like must arrive early, parents tend to arrive early as well. And because of the long drive home, they tend to stay at the school.

The idea was simple – hold quick, cogent briefings on school-related issues rather than letting parents simply sit in the library during the interim period. These mini-briefings, accompanied by punch and cookies (as well as appropriate books for younger siblings to read) have provided an excellent educational opportunity that parents seem to appreciate.

The committee also has begun consideration of ways to adapt the school as a community center, a gathering point for those in the widespread subdivisions that populate the school.

Starting the Be Safe and Sound team sprang loose a number of other actions, and the partnerships have become much bigger and more productive than participants could have imagined.

In a separate development, the school started a half-day, all-week school resource officer program that will become full-time in the 2006-2007 school year. This program has been well received and the Pennsylvania State Troopers who are filling the position right now have been active partners in Be Safe and Sound.

Challenges and Benefits

The team found that the initial \$500 spending limit did not work well with its timing needs. For example, the purchase of and training for the Teens, Crime, and the Curriculum program had to wait until the additional \$6,500 was released, which delayed by at least a semester the implementation of the program.

In the benefit column, however, is the establishment of emergency plans for both Lehman and High School North and the development of excellent relationships with emergency response personnel. Another benefit is that Lehman has already begun to work on the theft and bullying issues that are emerging as student concerns.

Lincoln Middle School, Catasauqua, PA

Setting

Catasauqua has been a small town near Allentown in eastern Pennsylvania. In recent years, it has become much more a suburb, and it has, like many older towns, experienced an influx of people seeking more for their housing dollar. This has, according to some of the Be Safe and Sound participants, somewhat eroded the small town atmosphere that many of them grew up with. Additionally, a number of the newcomers are commuters to work centers an hour or more away from Allentown.

The 2005-6 school year was the last for Lincoln Middle School in its current building, which cannot meet needs for modern equipment and facilities or provide adequate space for the projected population. Starting in September 2006, Lincoln's students are housed in the former high school building about a mile from its present site.

Using Be Safe and Sound

The Be Safe and Sound initiative at Lincoln became a rallying point for action against bullying, based on the student surveys, on teachers' observations of student behavior, and on school discipline issues.

The Lincoln Be Safe and Sound team was diverse – extending well beyond the school to community and area organizations for advice and support. In addition to a core of school staff including counselors and administrators, the team included representatives from the parent-teacher forum, the police department, the crime victims' services agency, the faith community, the school board, the borough council, the school coaching staff, the student body, and the faculty.

The Be Safe and Sound student, faculty, and parent surveys were administered at Lincoln in September 2005. The results, particularly from students, suggested that bullying was much more pervasive than adults had recognized and more widespread than reports had documented.

Funds from several sources, including Be Safe and Sound, helped bring in a well-regarded speaker on diversity, differences, and respect. The group selected the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program as its educational element and a school staff member has undertaken the necessary training to lead the program locally. That program will be implemented starting in the 2006-2007 school year.

In addition, educational materials, teaching strategies to follow up on the initial speaker presentation, and information for faculty, staff, and parents were planned, with Be Safe and Sound funds as part of the funding package.

The program was kicked off with the community speaker who addressed both the student body and the community. Classroom follow-up led to unexpectedly high and emotional disclosures of bullying incidents. The lessons stuck. Those who were in these sessions have continued to echo what was taught to them, a sure sign that the information penetrated.

The planning group spread the word throughout the community about the bullying prevention initiative, using ads to be placed in church and community group publications, the Neighborhood Watch network, the parent/teacher forum, and local newspapers. In addition, an advocacy board of local agencies was recruited; the board runs an active parent help referral line that directs callers to a wide range of agencies.

Be Safe and Sound funds were used for such expenses as refreshments for group meetings and costs of copying. They also paid for part of the kickoff speaker cost and are being used to help purchase school-year assignment/diary booklets with character-strengthening messages.

Challenges and Benefits

Faculty, school district staff, and parents themselves noted that parent involvement is a significant challenge. One parent pointed out that sports banquets draw more adults than do discussions of solving problems involving the community's children. Though Be Safe and Sound did bring many groups together, and though the Parent-Teacher Forum is an active partner, individual parents did not get heavily involved during the first year of the program.

A benefit of the program is that the survey process was instrumental in uncovering and documenting the extent and impact of bullying at the school. It identified other issues that needed attention but showed that bullying was a pervasive problem. This made it easier to focus efforts, to garner the support of community organizations, and to identify courses of action.

Morningside Elementary School, Pittsburgh, PA

Setting

This school, built in the early 1890s, is situated in what is now a transitional neighborhood of older, long-time residents with no school-age children and newcomers with some younger children. The school houses students in grades K through 8. It sits on one corner of an intersection that has a church, a private residence, and a bank on the other corners. The bank had been robbed several times in less than a year, which heightened security concerns.

The neighborhood, like most of Pittsburgh's core, sits on the side of a hill overlooking the Allegheny River. The small plateau that forms the neighborhood core includes a few restaurants, a dry cleaner, and some other small businesses. An important part of the

setting is that the school was closed at one time, less than ten years ago, and was reopened thanks to neighborhood pressures.

Using the Be Safe and Sound Program

This site is unique in that the local Wired Blocks community safety program was the program operator, rather than a school or school district. The local community leader of the program had won the principal's sign-off for the Be Safe and Sound grant and organized a team that included school staff, parents, and other residents as well as local business and public officials.

Planning was proceeding apace, and in fact the forum in early November was under way. Participants were eagerly discussing safety issues for the school and neighborhood; local police and other public agency officials had joined in the discussions. The school's principal had been called to a meeting downtown. She returned as the forum was drawing to a close with the news that the school was being closed at the end of the 2005-2006 academic year.

Much to its credit, the community-based leadership determined that the children still needed to be safe during that year in Morningside School. Work with the bank on a variety of security improvements continued, and there were no more robberies during the school year. A community safety rally that enlisted Morningside students and staff as well as local residents emphasized crime prevention and honored Morningside's role in the neighborhood with its title: Morningside Lights the Way. The Spotlight on Students featured the safety patrol, drill team, cheerleaders, and essay readers.

In addition, the Be Safe and Sound surveys were completed; they showed that older students felt less secure than younger ones in the school. Concerns over bullying predominated among those feeling less secure, and the school had encountered several instances of verbal taunts leading to physical violence. Despite the effort of Wired Blocks, anti-bullying programs were not put into place during Morningside's last year.

The Morningside Be Safe and Sound program also looked at safety issues in connection with the school that Morningside students would transfer to – Sunnyside Elementary School, farther up the mountainside.

Investigation revealed that the only two viable walking routes from the Morningside community to the new school presented severe hazards, including a dangerous curve that offered no sidewalks for pedestrians and a sharp, unprotected drop-off down a steep slope along the other route. The Be Safe and Sound team went to work investigating alternatives. Repairing either of the routes would take some time and would most likely be expensive. Because of its outreach to civic leaders, the team was able to ask the local state senator's staff for help.

As the school year closed, it appeared that funds would be available under a special provision of state law to pay for school buses that would provide safe routes for Morningside's students to continue their educations at the new school.

Challenges and Benefits

A major challenge was fully engaging the Morningside School leadership while it was confronted with the process of closing down the school. The Be Safe and Sound team continued to meet and make whatever progress it could, taking up challenges that did not necessarily require school personnel's attention.

A benefit of the program was the bringing together of a diverse group of residents to address shared concerns about community safety. Residents got to meet each other and learn to work together, which shows signs of strengthening the whole community. In addition, partnerships with local officials can help the community address other problems, and residents have learned how to tap resources in the city for their needs. Most importantly, the possibility of a community-based group leading a school-focused partnership was validated.

Mt. Carmel Junior-Senior High, Mt. Carmel, PA

Setting

The Mt. Carmel area is in the heart of anthracite coal country in the western core of Pennsylvania, about two hours' drive north of Harrisburg. Driving toward the town, one sees strip mine tailings and raw hillsides undergoing restoration, as well as coal loading stations for trains.

The area is cash-poor. The Mt. Carmel school district ranks 501 out of 501 in per-pupil spending. Yet the school is the second-biggest industry in the area. The building houses both junior and senior high school students from a wide catchment area around the town of Mt. Carmel, including students from several nearby smaller towns.

Using the Be Safe and Sound Program

Recognizing the many challenges they face, the Mt. Carmel school community has sought to bring together a range of initiatives to address a variety of student needs. Both from staff experience and from the Be Safe and Sound surveys, bullying, alcohol use, and tobacco use are among major problems in the building. Theft ranks high as a student concern.

In forming the Be Safe and Sound team, the school included the police department, other emergency responders, school district personnel, counselors, parents, faculty and students. Others were brought in as warranted. For example, the statistics class performed the survey tallying and analysis; the survey was extended to grades K-6, to compare their concerns with those of older students.

The school and the Be Safe and Sound Team have recognized that incremental steps are important. For example, the team is in discussion with town police about banning smoking near the school by students. Currently, by simply stepping beyond the school boundary, students are free to smoke; a number seek to go past a fence in the rear of the

school for a private “fix.” The aim is to develop a procedure that ensures that the area is monitored and that police are able to break up the activity. Rather than banning cell phones – a move that would have been ignored – students are required to turn them off while they are in school.

The school has also adopted the goal of being certified as a “green school” – an environmentally friendly school – under a statewide program, as a means of building respect for the school and for the health and wellbeing of students.

Teachers are excited about bringing the Teens, Crime, and the Community curriculum into the classroom because of its strategy of interactive student engagement, its development of understanding of crime’s adverse impacts on victims and community, and its wide range of subject matter. NCPC will be providing training to the school early in the 2006-2007 school year.

Among the first Be Safe and Sound-specific projects was one aimed at reducing graffiti in the hallways. Students were invited to design and paint murals, which was immensely popular and built a “pride of ownership” in keeping the murals intact that no lecture or lesson could hope to match.

One of the successes of the Mt. Carmel experience has been blending the various programs ranging from D.A.R.E. to SODA to Be Safe and Sound to recycling into a system that engages students, encourages and lays groundwork for acceptable behavior, and provides alternatives to mischief.

This latter point, Be Safe and Sound team members report, is vitally important in the Mt. Carmel area, as there are few diversions nearby in the way of malls, amusement parks, and the like. In the absence of commercial diversions, students tend to make their own. Hence, the school extends its reach to serving breakfast, to operating a summer day camp, and to a range of enrichment activities.

A benefit of the smaller community is that the school and the Mt. Carmel police have an excellent working relationship. The police chief is a strong advocate for what the schools are doing and stands ready, with his staff, to back it up. He has assigned a school resource officer to the facility full time, which benefits a number of programs. Consistency of enforcement and strong positive positions have helped solidify the SRO as a positive influence.

Challenges and Benefits

A major challenge is the low level of cash and related resources in the community. This means that the school must constantly seek grants that are compatible with its strategies and provide added value. An added challenge is that many of the students see their futures – and even their current diversions – as being outside the community, which makes it harder to bond them to the school.

Benefits include the Be Safe and Sound structure, which builds partnership and collaboration; access to such resources as Teens, Crime, and the Community; and the use of survey tools that supplement statistics on offenses and disciplinary actions with knowledge of how students, teachers, and parents actually perceive the school's safety.

Northside Elementary School, Harrisburg, PA

Setting

Northside Elementary School serves an older suburban area to the north and east of downtown Harrisburg. It houses not only children from the neighborhood but children with high levels of special needs from surrounding communities. Many families have remained in the area because of the good housing values; others have been attracted for the same reason.

The one-story building sits on a suburban road that is an artery for a series of subdivisions. The building includes a small front parking lot and a larger one to the side. The building appears to date from the 1960s or early 1970s.

Using the Be Safe and Sound Program

Northside was the only site in which a parent took the lead role in making Be Safe and Sound work. The start-up was delayed as the school's longtime principal retired at the end of the 2004-2005 school year and the incoming principal wanted the opportunity to review the program before committing to it. That turned out to be an asset. The new principal became convinced of the program's value and is one of its staunchest advocates.

The Be Safe and Sound team was built upon the already-existing Emergency Response Team. School leadership, including the principal, teachers, and key staff served on that committee. The PTA president and the Be Safe and Sound leader were added to the team, which also included local public safety personnel. As time went on, a number of interested parents volunteered to take on specific tasks. The PTA contributed \$5,000 toward several security measures. The team holds monthly meetings and keeps in touch by email as well.

The local police department and a district resource officer completed a safety evaluation of the school premises very early in the process. A number of needs were met immediately by the outgoing principal and volunteers. The Be Safe and Sound program incorporated the findings and the remaining "to-do" list in its planning.

Three areas of concern had emerged. One was appropriate supervision of visitors entering the lobby. A reorientation of the main office provided natural surveillance by staff both working in the office and coming in and out for various business.

A second concern was the realization that the school had no inter-room communications system other than the "squawk-box" public address system. This lack was highlighted

when senior staff and playground officials were supplied by the PTA with walkie-talkie service so that they could remain in touch at all times while in the area.

A third problem that was obvious was the difficulty of walking from the side parking lot around the building (along a sloping hillside) to enter through the main door. But with no individual access to that door, people persisted in propping it open. This became an especially acute issue when a new employee was found to be stealing credit cards from staff and passing them through that side door to a colleague who would use them to buy merchandise at local malls.

The communications problem was resolved by purchasing sufficient walkie-talkies for classroom teachers to have some means of direct, nonpublic communication. They more than proved their worth when a bomb threat required evacuation of the building. Thanks to the new communications set-up and to good staff training, the building was evacuated in five minutes in a calm, orderly fashion. This experience highlighted the need for an alternative shelter in case of bad-weather evacuations, and a church adjacent to the school has indicated that its basement area can be used as a short-term bad weather shelter.

The side door problem was addressed first by breaking up the illegal activity and is being further addressed with the installation of a “swipe card” automatic access system that lets authorized users cut through using the side door but automatically locks the door to intruders from the outside. In addition, the school district will work with the vendor that is installing the lock system to set up alarms.

Challenges and Benefits

One major challenge was for the program leader, a parent, to unravel and understand the workings of the school district with respect to purchasing, payments, and other operational activities. It became apparent that letters of introduction from the principal and Be Safe and Sound would have been helpful in building credibility. Another challenge was that the student survey questions were not readily amenable to response by children in grades K-3 and the many challenged children at the school who function at that level or whose disabilities make taking regular surveys very difficult.

A significant benefit of Be Safe and Sound is that it is a process. It continues to check on conditions, to develop solutions to emerging problems, and to build a climate of safety. It is not a one-time fix. Be Safe and Sound also forces a look at the whole school – climate as well as hardware, future problems as well as present needs. There is no question that the program enabled the school to identify and remedy effectively some key security issues.