



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND JUVENILE VIOLENCE
(Assembly Bill 686, Chapter 607, *Statutes of Nevada 1999*)
December 2, 1999
Las Vegas, Nevada

The third meeting of the Nevada Legislature's Commission on School Safety and Juvenile Violence (Assembly Bill 686, Chapter 607, *Statutes of Nevada 1999*) during the 1999-2000 interim was held on Thursday, December 2, 1999, commencing at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held in Room 4401, Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Las Vegas, Nevada, and was video conferenced to Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. Pages 2 and 3 contain the "Meeting Notice and Agenda" for this meeting.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT IN LAS VEGAS:

Senator Valerie Wiener, Chairman

Michael E. Johnson, Parent, Vice Chairman

Barbara Baxter, Teacher, Sparks High School

Tom Burns, Chief of Police, Henderson

Pamela Hawkins, Principal, Western High School

M. Kim Radich, Teacher, O'Callaghan Middle School

Vince Swinney, Retired, Law Enforcement Representative

COMMISSION MEMBERS IN CARSON CITY:

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell

Marcia Bandera, Superintendent, Elko County School District

Annie Rees, Parent, Owner of Annie's Bail Bonds

Keith Savage, Principal, Yerington High School

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT IN LAS VEGAS:

Juliann K. Jenson, Senior Research Analyst

R. Rene Yeckley, Senior Deputy Legislative Counsel

Linda Chandler Law, Senior Research Secretary

All place names mentioned in these minutes are in Nevada, unless otherwise noted.

MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

Name of Organization: Commission on School Safety and Juvenile Violence

(Assembly Bill 686, Chapter 607, *Statutes of Nevada 1999*)

Date and Time of Meeting: Thursday, December 2, 1999

9:30 a.m.

Place of Meeting: Grant Sawyer State Office Building

Room 4401

555 East Washington Avenue

Las Vegas, Nevada

Note: Some members of the Commission may be attending the meeting, and other persons may observe the meeting and provide testimony, through a simultaneous video conference conducted at the following location:

Legislative Building

Room 3138

401 South Carson Street

Carson City, Nevada

A G E N D A

I. Opening Remarks by the Chair and Introductions

Senator Valerie Wiener

***II. Approval of the Minutes of the November 9, 1999, Meeting**

***III. Review and Discussion Regarding the Development of a Statewide Emergency Response Plan to Incidents of School Violence**

A. Ralph Cadwallader, Nevada Association of School Administrators

B. Debbie Cahill, Nevada State Education Association

C. Henry Etchemendy, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards

D. Phil Gervasi, President, Police Officers' Association, Clark County School District (CCSD)

E. Brenda Kennedy, President, Nevada Parent-Teacher Association

F. Stan Olsen, Nevada Sheriff's and Chief's Association

G. Student Representatives, CCSD

*IV. Work Session: Development of a Statewide Emergency Response Plan to Incidents of School Violence

V. Public Comment

VI. Future Meetings and Directions to Staff

VII. Adjournment

*Denotes items on which the committee may take action.

Note: We are pleased to make reasonable accommodations for members of the public who are disabled and wish to attend the meeting. If special arrangements for the meeting are necessary, please notify the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, in writing, at the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada 89701-4747, or call Linda Chandler Law, at (775) 684-6825, as soon as possible.

Notice of this meeting was posted in the following Carson City, Nevada, locations: Blasdel Building, 209 East Musser Street; Capitol Press Corps, Basement, Capitol Building; City Hall, 201 North Carson Street; Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street; and Nevada State Library, 100 Stewart Street. Notice of this meeting was faxed for posting to the following Las Vegas, Nevada, locations: Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue; and Clark County Office, 500 South Grand Central Parkway.

OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN AND INTRODUCTIONS

Senator Valerie Wiener called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., and reviewed the need to work toward drafting an emergency response plan that can be presented to Governor Kenny C. Guinn in early January 2000, as directed in the enabling legislation. She explained that:

- The morning session would be devoted to hearing the testimony of various witnesses who are within "the circle of direct impact," who would be affected in a crisis involving school violence;
- The afternoon's activities would be devoted to selecting the components of a draft emergency response plan that would be appropriate to any on-campus crisis;
- The commission's suggestions and recommendations, once they are drafted by staff, may be amended during the meeting scheduled for January 5, 2000, prior to submission to the Governor; and
- When the document is forwarded to the Governor, the Chairman will request that the commission be given leave to further revise the plan, based on information gathered later in the study process.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 9, 1999, MEETING

Approval of the minutes of the November 9, 1999, meeting in Reno, Nevada, was postponed until the next meeting.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STATEWIDE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN TO INCIDENTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Ralph Cadwallader

Ralph Cadwallader, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Administrators (NASA), read from prepared testimony (see Exhibit A) and underscored NASA's:

- •Appreciation for the task given to this commission;
- •Position that learning best takes place in a school environment that is healthy and safe;
- •Belief that no school or community is exempt from the occurrence of either natural or man-made disaster; and
- •Opinion that the key factor in being prepared for and responding to such incidents is collaboration.

Further discussing the collaborative process, Mr. Cadwallader, explained that:

- •Interagency or intergroup bickering is unacceptable; and
- •Educators do not generally have the training necessary to effectively address catastrophic events.

He recommended that the draft plan include ideas gleaned from all stakeholders and that it be distributed in draft form to each school district and community agency prior to its being finalized. He also suggested that collaboration in this process be mandated among agencies. In addition, he stated that:

- •Emergency response plans should be reviewed annually;
- •A comprehensive training program for catastrophic events should be established to include all school employees and practiced and reviewed regularly, including drills in which students participate;
- •State and/or regional emergency response teams that are composed of well-trained individuals should be formed to support schools or school districts during catastrophic events; and
- •Funding should be provided to carry out those goals.

In conclusion, he stressed the need to continue the collaborative effort by practicing and reviewing the plan through rehearsals; otherwise, writing a plan will make no difference.

Ms. Radich agreed with Mr. Cadwallader and said that:

- This process will result in a variety of local plans and trained personnel; and
- Those people who are trained under the state plan should be in charge of handling crisis situations, and others, who do not have such expertise, should defer to them.

Some members voiced concern that exposing all aspects of crisis response to students, while participating in drills, might jeopardize the effectiveness of the plan. Mr. Cadwallader indicated that administrators need to exercise caution when running such drills to ensure that preparatory work done is age, grade, or situationally specific. Detailed tactical training for staff, however, can take place without students present. Being totally prepared for incidents, which might take place anywhere and at anytime, is a challenge that will require substantial forethought and the inclusion of various interests, e.g., the community, law enforcement, and schools. Preparation must be done because the safety of students is the paramount concern, he said.

Debbie Cahill

Debbie Cahill, representing the Nevada State Education Association (NSEA), read her prepared remarks (see Exhibit B for complete text) and explained:

- That the National Education Association (NEA) is in the process of finalizing the "NEA Crisis Communications Guide and Toolkit," which will include crisis information and resources that are available to school communities;
- When that document is published, a copy will be provided to the commission;
- The need for state involvement, in a coordinating and oversight capacity, in crisis planning, prevention, and response (including resource sharing when appropriate) as required in the commission's enabling legislation;
- The state plan should provide for the review of district plans, through whatever agency is charged with such responsibilities, to ensure they are comprehensive and complete;
- Emergency response funding should be provided for and easily accessible;
- Following the commission's culmination in mid-2000, there should be an on-going state review role and presence, especially to assist in rural areas of the state; and

- •The delivery of a statewide plan to the state's Department of Education or to law enforcement authorities will not ensure the fulfillment of stated goals.

Ms. Cahill also discussed the passage of Assembly Bill 521, *Chapter 591, Statutes of Nevada 1999*, which provides guidance to schools and staff who must deal with disruptive students. See Exhibit C for three documents: "AB 521, The New Student Discipline Law, Is your school in compliance?" (C₁); "An Important Message to NSEA Members about Student Discipline," (C₂); and "Building Safe and Orderly Schools" (C₃), which includes a study guide and two video tapes.

Since passage of A.B. 521, the NSEA:

- •Has worked to ensure that its members are aware of the bill and its application; and
- •Views the implementation of the measure as going well for the most part.

Some administrators, however, according to anecdotal information received from NSEA members, have been reluctant to fully enforce the new law because they are hesitant to either suspend students or confront parents. Therefore, the opportunity for underreporting disciplinary or violent incidents is substantial. She cited recent articles that reported a decrease in gun violence and physical attacks on students but an increase in physical assaults on teachers on school property; however, she wondered if those changes result from inaccurate reporting of incidents. She questioned how schools and society in general effectively curtail violence if classroom disruptions are not dealt with effectively.

Ms. Cahill said that the passage of A.B. 521 has encouraged teachers to:

- •Acknowledge their responsibility to manage their classrooms; and
- •Direct student behavior in a positive way.

Further, during 1999, the NEA joined with the American Federation of Teachers to create a training program called "Building Safe and Orderly Schools" (C₃), which focuses heavily on:

- •Classroom management;

- •Increasing communications with parents;
- •Intervening in antisocial student behavior; and
- •Developing strategies for improving student behavior in and out of the classroom in an effort to avoid having to remove disruptive students.

Another program called "Responding to Hate at School," was produced by the Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center (see Exhibit D for this program material). This guide for school personnel includes several chapters that speak to reducing bigotry and intolerance, including:

- •Everyday Action;
- •School-Wide Emergency Response;
- •Long-Range Commitment; and
- •Appendices, which describe related models, policies, strategies, symbols, and other resources.

Ms. Cahill requested that the state support intervention and prevention efforts by providing funding and guidance to districts and staff.

Following a discussion of the merits of programs such as Teaching Tolerance, Senator Wiener noted that teachers are the "first line of response" to intolerant behavior, and classroom teachers need training in how to respond to and reintegrate potentially disruptive students who are returned from alternative programs. It was suggested that a program like Teaching Tolerance be included in in-service training for teachers.

Student Representatives, Clark County School District (CCSD)

Senator Wiener noted that the testimony of student representatives would be taken out of order to allow them to return to school, as necessary.

Janine Tegano, senior and student body president of the Las Vegas Academy of International Study and the Performing and Visual Arts at Las Vegas High School, CCSD, thanked the commission for including students in this process. She noted that she served as a Nevada delegate to the "Voices Against Violence" conference held on October 19 and 20, 1999, in Washington, D.C., where more than 300 students gathered to discuss school violence issues. Ms. Tegano explained that there were opportunities, during the conference, for participants to:

- Discuss what was going on in communities across the country;
- Proactively deal with various aspects of school violence issues;
- Create a resolution that the United States House of Representatives Democratic Caucus adopted, which identified the causes, community needs, and possible solutions related to school violence;
- Stress the importance of dealing with these issues realistically with a view toward reducing and preventing future incidents;
- Determine the circumstances that may engender violence in a community and, therefore, in the schools; and
- Recognize that an emergency response plan is necessary.

In studying the CCSD Emergency Action Plan (EAP), she observed that it is comprehensive and seems to address the issues well. In her view, it is important to ensure that more students know that a plan exists. Consciences need to be raised, perhaps through a series of practices and drills. Students need to be prepared in a crisis event, whether it is an earthquake, a fire, or an incidence of school violence. Teachers and students should know how to react based on the unique circumstances and their site-based plan.

Responding to comments from the panel, Ms. Tegano said that:

- The use of crisis management teams during an emergency, to deal with the "emotional fallout," is good since the event affects every student differently;
- A safe room staffed with counselors for students who are traumatized and not prepared to return to class is essential;

- More important that the initial reaction to emergency rehearsals and drills, students need to know what to do to protect themselves; and, for that reason alone, drills should be conducted;
- At the beginning of each year, teachers should review the need for and types of emergencies and drills that will be practiced with the students;
- Knowing that a plan exists may serve as a deterrent for some students and reassurance for others;
- Removing disruptive students from a classroom, in her view, is beneficial inasmuch as it allows the remaining students to study without unnecessary interruption;
- Peer mediation training can be effective in reducing conflict and increasing connectedness among classmates, and she would embrace an opportunity to be trained in observation and reporting skills that would facilitate the identification of youth who might be going through a time of personal crisis;
- It is important that more students become familiar with who is in their daily environment; and
- Approaching students who remove themselves from the mainstream has been encouraged at the academy and, although there are times that kids remove themselves voluntarily, contact often can be effective in reinvolving them with the collective group.

Ms. Tegano also noted that the academy:

- May be unique since part of its attraction is its ability to build an appreciation for the diversity of its students and their respective talents;
- Is not involved in athletics, which can lead to the "cheering and jeering" of certain students;
- Has an environment that does not result in popularity based on more common criteria but, rather, upon an individual's unique qualities; and
- Provides training that develops and praises an individual's talents and thinking skills, which is a different

cultural approach than most schools project.

Chairman Wiener thanked Ms. Tegano for sharing her ideas and perspective.

Shannon West

Shannon West, Clark County Social Services manager for the Neighborhood Justice Center, which is a community mediation center for southern Nevada, explained that part of that program includes operating the CCSD mediation program. The program, funded solely through grant awards, began in 1992 under a contract with the CCSD. There are approximately 50 school mediation programs, which make up a portion of the school infrastructure, that utilize pupils to work out problems among other students.

In the participating schools, most of which are middle schools, an agreement or contract is established to provide consultant support for three years. The program is institutionalized at each site by:

- Including a comprehensive curriculum that inculcates the concept and meaning of conflict resolution into the school population;
- Training a staff implementation team (usually each has about eight members) to ensure the continuation of the program at each school; and
- Training students to be mediators, based on grade-appropriate strategies. At the elementary school level, for instance, students with clipboards and sashes actually step in to resolve conflicts (by writing basic contracts among the students) and subsequently make reports of the incidents. They understand the difference between collaboration and compromise. In secondary schools, a more adult model is used, i.e., students can be diverted into the program by a teacher or the dean's office, and they are expected to work toward a realistic solution under the auspices of a mediator.

Due to the receipt of additional grant money, a commitment to establish about 20 new programs has been made. The county is interested in broadening and continuing these programs and is seeking money to support that desire over the next five years.

Ms. West explained that:

- In working with adults, the agreement rate brought about through mediation is about 72 percent;
- In schools, the agreement rate increases to approximately 91 percent; and
- Last year, among the 40 schools participating, about 1,900 conflicts were mediated.

Senator Wiener commented that this type of diversionary program may help to teach children to resolve their anger, recognize their conflicts, and avoid violence.

Ms. Hawkins asked what factors are involved in selecting the schools in which the program is instituted, what the attendant cost is, and if there are kinds of conflicts that are outside this mediation process. Ms. West said that the CCSD program:

- Is provided at no cost to a school, it is funded through law enforcement block grants; however, eventually a school may incur some cost to maintain the program after the three years have passed. Training is provided on how to pursue funding for program continuation. The program costs about \$12,000 for a secondary school and between \$5,000 and \$8,000 at the elementary level, mostly for teacher training costs and substitute release time;
- Utilizes the services of two representatives of the superintendent who recommend the schools to be targeted, and the focus has been on the middle schools; and
- Works with the school to determine the role the peer mediation program will fill on that specific campus. Some schools use it for all issues, e.g., name calling, fighting, rumors, and so forth, including post-sanction applications; whereas other campuses do not use it so extensively.

Mr. Savage explained that Yerington High School is developing a peer mediation program. He asked if there were certain techniques or approaches that tend to make such programs successful at the high school level. Ms. West responded that part of the acceptance of peer mediation is how the administration uses it as a tool and how it fits into the school's infrastructure. A peer mediation program alone will not handle all the issues of concern; however, in schools where it has been successful, it has been attached to the counselors' or dean's office. Another aspect that has aided in integration is the involvement of nontraditional and traditional student leaders, who represent the various strata of the school community, to create the feeling that everyone is "buying in" to the process.

Ms. West also noted that no system exists to track the success of the program; however, some data is available on

incidents in participating schools, and that can be contrasted against schools that are not participating. There appears to be a reduced number of violent events in those schools that are involved in peer mediation. That data is controversial, however. Empirical evidence is lacking. Subjective evidence offered by staff reports infers that the numbers and severity of incidents have decreased on such campuses, and some school environments have become more "comfortable" and have generated more "helper" programs, which also tends to reduce incidents. Peer mediation is not a solution. It is a piece of the overall infrastructure that creates transferable human interaction skills.

Henry Etchemendy

Henry Etchemendy, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards (NASB), provided written testimony and other information. See Exhibit E. Reading from his prepared remarks (Exhibit E₁), Mr. Etchemendy stated that:

- •Many, if not all, school districts have response plans in place for many types of emergencies, which detail the site and district actions to be taken (see Exhibit E₂ for an example, the Washoe County School District "School Violence-Prevention, Planning and Response" plan);
- • The NASB would assist in obtaining any other plans the commission might want to review;
- •The school district must be the prime mover in developing, administering, and updating its plans since it must meet the obligations of its unique community, and it must include in that activity appropriate local representatives and stakeholders who are familiar with the area's circumstances and needs;
- •It is helpful to also include in this process state and federal agencies, i.e., the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), from which helpful information and guidance may be obtained;
- •A state plan, such as is being developed by this commission, should provide guidelines that can be customized for use by disparate districts in Nevada;
- •Interlocal agreements and memoranda of understanding may be necessary in some instances where a school may be nearer another county's resources than to its own district administration;
- •Regional or state response teams can be used to supplement local response teams during times of crisis response, bringing much needed support and expertise in some instances;
- •All school district superintendents should be given the opportunity to review the commission's draft plan and respond to it in a timely and constructive manner; and
- •Training must become an on-going process if it is to be effective.

Phil Gervasi

Phil Gervasi, President, Police Officers' Association (POA), CCSD, submitted a copy of "Essentials of an Emergency Response Plan" (Exhibit F), which was prepared by the POA. Mr. Gervasi, explained that the CCSD EAP:

- Provides site and districtwide standard organizational structures for managing resources used to minimize loss and general procedures for protecting persons during emergency response activities; and
- Utilizes administrative staff to meet the needs of the district and ensure student and staff safety.

The Incident Command System (ICS) for emergency responders, on the other hand, is a separate plan that:

- Has as its number one priority "life safety," which inherently includes a degree of danger or risk;
- Places responders' safety secondary to that of citizens; and
- Endeavors to prevent the deterioration of an event and, thereby, preclude loss of life, injury, property damage, and environmental damage.

The ICS philosophy, "You must control the situation or it will control you," is recognized as the foundation for an effective, all-risk emergency planning, response, and recovery capability that involves delegation, empowerment, and management by objectives. To be effective, economy of resources must be achieved. As necessary and to the extent possible medical treatment must be obtained for victims immediately. Medical assistance obtained during the "golden hour" following injury results in the victim's greatest chance of survival.

Mr. Gervasi outlined in detail the four phases of incident management, i.e., the initial response, stabilization, maintenance, and recovery. He also explained that:

- Collaboration and coordination among the various agencies affected by an emergency response are critical.
- The CCSD police department (CCSDPD), consists of 120 officers who are charged with providing a safe

environment for students and staff as well as serving as "first responder" in school incidents.

- School police are trained and equipped to be the part of a capable response team, and they are those who know every nook and cranny of the facility.
- Officers called in from other jurisdictions may have little or no knowledge of the site.
- Not including school police in multi-disciplinary training exercises, as was done at a site in Henderson, Nevada, following the Columbine High School (Littleton, Colorado) shootings, place the safety of students and staff in peril.
- Generally, all Clark County police agencies, including the CCSDPD, work together on a daily basis, and school police must participate in training exercises if the desire is to produce a law enforcement team to promote school safety.
- In addition to districtwide, regional, and state response teams that could be called in to assist schools during catastrophic incidents, it may also be possible to utilize interstate agreements in areas where proximity to an adjoining state might make response more timely. The same principal might apply to remote areas of some counties within the state that have facilities far removed from the county seats.
- A uniform emergency-responder communications system throughout the state would facilitate information and status exchange among participants (the lack of such a system hampered the response at Columbine High School).
- The establishment of a legislative policy that would direct all emergency resources to work and communicate as a team, to provide necessary equipment and other resources to effectively respond in these types of catastrophic events, would provide a safer learning environment for Nevada's children.

Responding to questions from the panel, Mr. Gervasi said that:

- Campus officers are armed, and they are trained at the same Police Officers Standards and Training academy as other police personnel in the state.
- It would be advisable to equip school police supervisors' vehicles with weaponry that could be used to respond in kind to incidents involving sophisticated weapons.
- The average SWAT response time is in excess of 15 minutes and school police should have some way to protect a school's population in the meantime.
- The CCSDPD was not given a reason for being precluded from the training that was held in Henderson, they were simply told to "stay out of harm's way" by not going to Green Valley High School during those exercises.

- In his view, the intimate knowledge of school facilities that school police have would be very important for practicing an efficient response.
- When serious incidents occur on school property and 911 is called, the call is routed to the local police department office; however, the call is then referred by the local dispatcher to the appropriate CCSDPD officer on duty.

Brenda Kennedy

Brenda Kennedy, President, Nevada Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), provided written remarks and supporting documents (Exhibit G) that describe the role of PTA. In addition to her written testimony (see Exhibit G₁ for complete text), she noted that:

- Over the past 100 years the PTA has become involved in many of the toughest issues to confront American families;
- Nationwide people are questioning "what is happening to our children" and are trying to find proactive measures to prevent these tragedies;
- The national PTA organization has issued many position statements to support violence prevention measures (see Exhibit G₂) and offers a variety of resources, which could be provided to commission members, as well as training opportunities on related issues; and
- Nevada PTA has more than 30,000 members.

In preparation for this meeting, Ms. Kennedy said she had been asked to gather information from members on the following questions (followed by the most common responses):

1. If you were writing a school emergency response plan, what would be your main areas of concern? (Evacuation procedures, student safety, communication strategies, identification of emergency personnel, and methods of parental notification.)

2. What would concern you the most as a parent should an emergency arise at your child's school? (A concern for their child's safety, how they would have access to information about the situation, and how they would contact their own child.)

3. What should be the main structure and leadership of the response plan? (The school administrator should be the commander or team leader with a core team of key support staff who have specific responsibilities; there should be coordinators for students, staff, and the media; the school district should provide guidelines for basic safety, but the site should provide for unique facility issues.)

4. What entities do you feel should collaborate in the development and implementation of the response plan? (The entire community, including teachers, support staff, counselors, parent, emergency rescue personnel, police and fire departments, utility companies and other affected businesses, mental and physical health providers and facilities, and other organizations that could assist or provide services.)

5. How prepared do you feel your child's school is in the event of an emergency? (Most felt schools are inadequately prepared, since plans have not been shared.)

6. What other considerations should be included in developing an emergency response plan? (There should be more than one plan, e.g., on-site and off-site plans for evacuation, the establishment of headquarters, continuity of communication contingencies, and so forth.)

In addition to the foregoing, parents also expressed concern about:

- •Alternate evacuation routes for all emergencies;
- •Alternate or off-site retrieval systems to access student data;
- •What provisions are in place for the evacuation of students with disabilities;
- •Training in preventive measures, including conflict management;
- •The institution of zero-tolerance policies for class management and safety;

- •The posting of simplified "Safe Schools Hotline" contact numbers in schools and nearby businesses;
- •Thorough training in emergency plans and procedures should be undertaken, rather than simply furnishing written copies to staff;
- •Communication -- telephone lines must be kept open in an emergency and information must be made available to parents; and
- •The need to use professionally trained personnel to debrief staff and students promptly and continue counseling to reduce effects of emotional trauma.

Ms. Kennedy noted, in conclusion, that:

- •Violence crosses all economic and social boundaries;
- •No one should believe communities or schools are immune from violence, as they are not immune from other catastrophes and disasters;
- •Schools should directly address students' destructive and violent behavior with a zero-tolerance policy;
- •The development and implementation of emergency response plans is a step in the right direction; and
- •Prevention, preparation, and education are critical factors in making schools safe.

Rod Jett

Rod Jett, a Lieutenant in charge of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police (Metro) SWAT team, in place of Stan Olsen, Nevada Sheriff's and Chief's Association, provided information on the procedures and policies related to incidents of school violence such as those that occurred at Columbine High School.

In his view, this is a complex problem and if such an incident were to occur in Las Vegas:

- The effects would be "overwhelming" for law enforcement and the entire community, and
- Every resource would be involved.

The key to avoiding such situations is, in his view, placing thorough intervention and prevention programs in place. The common denominator among perpetrators in the incidents, from Colorado to Kentucky, has been a feeling of exclusion from the school group. They have seen themselves as unpopular, not members of the "in crowd." In his view, the development of a cultural or school environment that precipitates such feelings is not a "law enforcement problem." There is a critical need for parents and teachers to recognize students who are exhibiting those feelings before something happens.

Once an incident occurs, regardless of its magnitude, law enforcement must respond. Therefore, speaking generally and on behalf of all law enforcement agencies in the community, the following concepts are important to understand:

- Metro will aggressively attack any scenario that is similar to the one at Columbine;
- A SWAT team will enter the school and try to solve the problem as soon as possible;
- There is no set plan for a tactical response to a violent incident because each is unique; and
- Over the past five-year period, each attack has become more aggressive and violent and the goal has been to kill more students than in the last event.

Lieutenant Jett explained that at Columbine High School, the attackers had more than 60 explosive devices and 4 automatic weapons, with which they anticipated killing more than 200 students. In his view, the next time, the objective will be to have an even higher kill ratio. Therefore, no law enforcement organization can accurately anticipate its response or its success. The primary objective of Metro, however, will be to preserve life aggressively.

Some of the preparation that Metro has done includes attending a debriefing seminar at which a SWAT lieutenant and sergeant who were directly involved at Columbine explained that:

- Their police department had 109 officers, none of whom had ever experienced anything of a similar magnitude, and they were not prepared.

- •No command structure was in place and the proper resources and tools were not available; and
- •Columbine was not considered by the department to be a "problem" school; it was not located in a high-crime area and parents were actively involved in students' lives.

Again, historically, the affected schools have not been considered potential targets for violence.

Therefore, the policy of Metro is to aggressively attack the problem through various methods, including search and apprehension tactics or a negotiation approach. The motives and psychology of the perpetrators cannot be anticipated and has appeared to change over time. An "active shooter" is the term used for either a lone attacker or group of attackers who are armed and who enter a building to kill as many people as they can. The dynamic situation set in place by active shooters changes the police response required. What law enforcement planned for five years ago, is no longer effective because the perpetrators have changed their style. Therefore, law enforcement agencies have had to "adapt to overcome" based on the circumstances presented at each event.

The Green Valley High School training activity, which occurred in July 1999, was attended by SWAT teams from Henderson, Metro, North Las Vegas, and the local FBI. That group had never come together before as a law enforcement community to train for a large-scale incident. There were more than 170 active role players (many of whom were students, including some who were mentally or physically challenged) who assisted in the re-enactment of the Columbine shootings. A lot was learned from that training exercise, e.g.:

- •Communication capabilities need to be improved;
- •Individual tactical teams train, react, and respond differently from one another and have varying levels of expertise, but that is not a significant problem;
- •As long as you get into the building to actively address the situation, the biggest hurdle has been overcome; and
- •Analyzing the situation for too long exacerbates the problems to be faced and dealt with.

Metro has also spearheaded a series of classes to instruct local law enforcement in the process of incident command, which teaches strategies and techniques that put everyone "on the same page." That training is effective in ensuring that when these trained people come together at an incident, they are able to work in concert. Following Columbine, Metro directed each area captain of each substation to survey schools in their jurisdiction; designate locations for command posts, evacuation sites for students, and central information points for parents and the media.

Lieutenant Jett explained that details and specifics are not available for discussion, but the commission and the public can have confidence in the fact that Metro is prepared for these eventualities. In his estimation, within an hour and a half of the initiation of such an event, there will be a resolution.

Senator Wiener explained that the state emergency response plan will address not only incidents of school violence but also other crisis situations and, hopefully, the guidelines will be broad enough to encompass the bigger picture. Therefore, she questioned whether Metro has the ability to comfortably address the various types of disasters that may befall the community in a timely fashion and in a coordinated manner with other law enforcement agencies that may come into play.

Lieutenant Jett responded that, in his view and based on his 21-year experience in Las Vegas, the department has responded well to a variety of circumstances, from industrial incidents to civil disobedience and riots. All those incidents have encompassed a concern about and provision for students present on school property. Multi-jurisdictional interaction has been necessary and successful in the past, and it does not pose as big a problem as most people perceive.

Plans exist and are in place, for both the school district police and Metro, that address unusual incidents that may occur on school properties, including but not limited to: natural disasters, power failures, rioting, an aggressive presence on campus, and other less catastrophic events, which are used almost daily. There have been a variety of lock-down situations on Clark County campuses in the past, where students have not been allowed to leave their classrooms until the police have ensured their safety.

Responding to questions from the commission members, Lieutenant Jett explained:

- Principals and campus police currently should have access to school site plans that are filed with local law enforcement agencies and if those cannot be located, additional copies can be provided;
- A notebook or binder was created from information provided by the administration of every CCSD high school, and a copy of that plan book was distributed to every patrol captain, lieutenant, and sergeant to be kept available for reference;
- Subsequently, the CCSD prepared a CD ROM for the law enforcement community and the administrators in the district with the same basic plans and information as were contained in the plan book;

- The CD ROM includes information for first responders, i.e., site plans; however, it does not include details on law enforcement command posts, evacuation sites, and things of that nature;
- Regardless of the plan that was in place at Columbine, which may have anticipated a single shooter or a gang-related event, it did not address the type of incident that occurred -- no agency, from Los Angeles to New York, had a plan in place for the Columbine catastrophe until after it happened;
- As a first responder in an active shooter crisis situation, such as Columbine, a SWAT team is not concerned with effective communications to the outside until an incident scene is secured. When students are running out of a building and telling the responder that someone is armed and shooting, the only thing to do is follow the shots and the screaming until the perpetrator or perpetrators are located and subdued as quickly as possible. Communication is secondary at that point. The first concern is to stop the aggressor's actions; and
- In a "traditional" hostage or barricade situation, communication is more important because it lends itself to the establishment of an incident command system at a central location, which includes the collaborative and cooperative participation of representatives of various affected entities, so that actions can be directed properly.

Senator Wiener clarified that the commission's concept of "communication" is how it pertains to responding to the community and parents when they become aware of the incident and how it allows teachers to manage their classrooms. Based on that definition, Lieutenant Jett said:

- When school police were updating their emergency action plans, one of the problems identified was a need to improve the methods by which teachers can better communicate what is happening inside their classrooms to administrators in the building, i.e., through improving systems, the use of cell phones and signals, and offsite data archival.
- There is no single answer to ensuring communications since any room can be the starting point of an aggressor's scenario. If, for example, the office were that point, in most instances, intraschool communication would be "over with."
- Instituting multiple systems for communicating unusual circumstances within in a school would provide the best chance of having some means of effective communication remain available.
- "Suicide by cop" is not a common occurrence, however, some perpetrators take their own lives when capture by the police appears imminent, while some flee to other locations where they may commit suicide or surrender, usually after some period of negotiation.
- Predicting human behavior is not certain because the dynamics of each situation is different. Using negotiators

and mental health experts may help, but ultimately the outcome is dependent upon the decisions of the attacker.

- One situation that adds to the confusion during a response is the inability to turn off alarm bells or sirens because the equipment is interior to the area under siege and/or not accessible from outside the building.
- Another phenomenon that can increase the personal danger to students and impair police in their search for the shooter is the tendency for students, as understandable as it may be, to attach themselves to the officers while the search is being made.
- In an incident the magnitude of Columbine, Metro will utilize the school police presence to the fullest extent possible since they know their schools and have valuable expertise, regardless of what school administration policy is, because that would be the common sense thing to do.
- The use of predesignated or commonly known frequencies, which can be monitored by the attackers, can foil response, rescue, and apprehension plans in today's electronically sophisticated environment. At Columbine, the most effective means of obtaining information from inside the school was a cell phone used by the school's librarian.
- In a shooting incident, when the shooting stops, there is a need to change gears and begin a systematic, slowed search for the people you are looking for -- both students and suspects -- and at that point students who are apparently safe should not be brought out of classrooms until the suspects are apprehended and students and staff are released.
- Receiving accurate tactical intelligence on arrival is the key to making an appropriate response to the situation at hand.

Mr. Burns commented that law enforcement knows what to do in responding; however, an increase in these violent campus events has demonstrated a need to train school personnel about what to do, and that change should be the focus of the commission. In addition, the level of cooperation and understanding between entities should be improved.

In conclusion, Lieutenant Jett said:

- It is not the function of Metro to train employees of private businesses or other agencies.
- It is impossible to train people to react to a "mad man," law enforcement officers who have been trained responders for years are not comfortable in these circumstances and have to work to adjust their psyches to deal with these types of people.

- Beginning in February 2000, Metro will begin training all its personnel on how to handle an aggressive shooter because whatever officer is closest to a scene should know how to approach such a situation.
- Metro provides uniformed police personnel to school sites to familiarize children with officers, including SWAT teams and their equipment. Metro also participates in career- and graduation-day programs.

WORK SESSION:

DEVELOPMENT OF A STATEWIDE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN TO INCIDENTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Chairman Wiener explained that the goal of this portion of the meeting is to formulate the scope and direction necessary for staff to draft a state school crisis response plan that will provide guidelines and standards for the state's school districts to use to measure their own, locally specific crisis response plans. She said that the commission could follow the lead of other states to complete this process. Exhibit H includes three documents, provided by staff, which outline efforts at school crisis response planning, to which Senator Wiener referred. In her view, utilizing the work of others could be beneficial to the commission's effort. She reiterated the need to submit the draft plan to the Governor in January 2000 and to reserve the right to amend the plan as information becomes available before the commission finishes its work.

Rene Yeckley, the commission's legal staff, said an informal discussion of the topics to be considered for inclusion in the draft plan would be appropriate. Once a draft is completed, commission members will have the opportunity to approve or amend its provisions.

Chairman Wiener:

- Asked members to reflect on previous witnesses' testimony and recall the common threads included in those comments and presentations;
- Read the portions of A.B. 686, both mandatory and permissive, applicable to the discussion to follow regarding the plan to be developed; and
- Read portions of Alaska's statutory provisions (see Exhibit H₁ for Section 14.33.100, "Required school crisis response planning"; and "Making School Crisis Response Planning Work," by Joseph A. Kinney, M.P.A., excerpted from *Association of Alaska School Boards - Commentary*) and indicated that perhaps that might be a

good starting point for discussion.

Following a discussion of the unique circumstances that the social and geographical characteristics of Nevada pose, Chairman Wiener and the members exchanged ideas about the following topics:

- •The flow of command during emergency events;
- •How school districts can provide comment on the draft plan;
- •Requirements for the annual review and update of local plans, perhaps during the update of staff handbooks;
- •The need to leave the mechanics of implementation to the local schools;
- •The need to avoid micromanaging district operations and policies;
- •How and to what extent standard, basic response procedures will be established in the plan;
- •The need to address preventive and early intervention measures so that the use of the plan might be avoided;
- •Consideration of a unified, incident command structure, perhaps using a statewide coordinator to supervise necessary functions;
- •Integration of statewide guidelines into training manuals that are available to all district personnel;
- •Utilization of an existing agency that already has the infrastructure in place to do coordination might be preferable to and more expeditious than creating a new entity; and
- •Achieving some level of continuity and consistency among districts.

Senator Wiener suggested stepping through Exhibit H₁ to see if Alaska's statutory provisions address Nevada's needs. Referring to Exhibit H, generally, members discussed the core team concept, among other things. During that process, it was suggested that:

- Perhaps the first paragraph of the statutory language in Exhibit H₁ should require the development of (1) a community crisis response planning team that is enabling -- that meets only occasionally; (2) a site crisis response team that is mandated -- that is on-going; and (3) a statewide school crisis response team that is enabling -- that is available as needed.

A wide-ranging discussion of these concepts and variations that would pertain to or address the needs of Nevada's urban and rural counties followed, and key comments included:

- Avoiding too many levels of bureaucracy might be desirable, or perhaps using a regional concept might better serve Nevada's needs;
- The potential benefits of using enabling language that could be customized to local characteristics while retaining a consistent framework;
- Garnering support for rural and remote area administrations through interdistrict agreements or cooperative networks might be preferable to a state coordinator-type approach;
- Questioning how a state coordinator would be selected;
- Rural counties may call on crisis response teams that already exist in the urban areas, it is important for smaller counties to know who to contact and where to go for help;
- Information, organizational including schematics, presented by Ms. Cherie Lovre at the November 9, 1999, meeting in Reno can be studied and utilized in structuring plans and in responding to crises;
- The reference to "department" in the Alaska law should be interpreted as the state's Department of Education; and
- Interlocal, interagency, or interstate agreements may be considered for expediency of response in rural or remote areas (some may already be in place and ready).

Ms. Parnell suggested that the language in paragraph (a) of Exhibit H₁ covers local planning and response at the site level and, more broadly, at the larger community or regional involvement level. The community involvement, however, should be part of the district plan. She and other members suggested language and volunteered to assist legal staff with the precise wording of that portion of the draft plan. Dialogue continued regarding the:

- •Interaction and scope of the various teams; and
- •Involvement of students at different grade levels.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jack Lazzarotto

Jack Lazzarotto, Director of Police Services, CCSD; President of the National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officers; and a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, commended the commission on its efforts. In addition, he underscored that it is imperative to include school police officers in the role of first responders. School officers generally have an excellent relationship with Metro and other municipal and county law enforcement agencies, and they are inherently familiar with school facilities and the students themselves.

School police also provide positive role models for children, and they epitomize community-oriented policing. In addition, the specialized law enforcement units in Clark County deserve a great measure of confidence and would provide invaluable services during a catastrophic school event.

Mr. Lazzarotto explained that:

- •During events in Mississippi and Oregon, he was in contact with affected police and administrative representatives through the superintendents' offices.
- •One of the questions always asked is, "What happened?" And, the answer usually is, "We didn't expect that to happen here."
- •Increasingly, areas traditionally considered as "nontargets" are involved and the perpetrators are non-gang-affiliated students who come from middle class backgrounds.
- •Interagency agreements can be combined and broadened to include student input and participation.

- Nevada, as a state, and Clark County, as a local entity, are leading many other jurisdictions in efforts to deflect this type of activity by planning for emergency management.

In conclusion, he reiterated the benefits that can be gained by including school police as a key part of the response where they are available as a resource.

Ken Young

Ken Young, CCSDPD sergeant, explained that, in his view, districtwide consistency will be a critical component in ensuring the successful implementation of plans. The first steps in response to a crisis must always be the same so that everyone knows what to expect procedurally.

Returning to the commission's discussion, Ms. Yeckley cautioned the members not to exceed the scope of the enabling legislation. Chairman Wiener explained that the draft plan would be available for review and discussion at the January 2000 meeting. Anyone wishing to offer suggestions might want to contact Ms. Yeckley directly.

Also commented upon at this juncture was the perceived need to institute or incorporate violent-event drills into the emergency exercises already in place.

Following a brief recess, Chairman Wiener explained that Ms. Yeckley had outlined the requirements of A.B. 686, which authorize the inclusion of:

- A description of the action that will be taken in response to an incident of school violence that warrants emergency action, including without limitation the designation of the persons and state agencies that are primarily responsible for each action;
- Nevada's Department of Education, as the state's umbrella agency; and
- A method of determining the amount of money that is necessary to appropriately respond to an incidence of school violence, which would require that the schools develop a contingency budget for implementation and be able to request funding from the school districts, if it is required by the circumstances. The special fund in which this money would be deposited would be established at the state level and would be structured to receive donations, gifts, and grants, in addition to federal or state funds.

Also to be investigated by staff are:

- Strategies for state officers and employees to coordinate with the appropriate city, county, and federal authorities;
- The types and duration of support services including training for pupils, teachers, parents, and communities;
- The types of and support for law enforcement agencies; and
- The circumstances under which requests for funding may be made to the Interim Finance Committee, based on the recommendations of the commission.

FUTURE MEETINGS AND DIRECTIONS TO STAFF

Chairman Wiener asked the members to be prepared to review the draft plan prior to the next meeting, which is scheduled for January 5, 2000. She thanked everyone for their attention and input into this process and assured them that there would be an opportunity to "fine tune" the provisions of the plan before it is sent to the Governor.

Exhibit I is the "Attendance Record" for this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Chandler Law
Senior Research Secretary

Juliann K. Jenson
Senior Research Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Senator Valerie Wiener, Chair

Date: _____

LIST OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit A is the written testimony of Ralph Cadwallader, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Administrators.

Exhibit B is the written testimony of Debbie Cahill, representing the Nevada State Education Association (NSEA).

Exhibit C includes three documents: "AB 521, The New Student Discipline Law, Is your school in compliance?" (C₁); "An Important Message to NSEA Members about Student Discipline" (C₂); and "Building Safe and Orderly Schools" (C₃), which includes a study guide and two video tapes, submitted by Ms. Cahill.

Exhibit D includes program material titled "Responding to Hate at School," produced by Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which was also submitted by Ms. Cahill.

Exhibit E includes written testimony (E₁), submitted by Henry Etchemendy, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards, together with a copy of the Washoe County School District "School Violence-Prevention, Planning and Response" plan (E₂).

Exhibit F is a copy of "Essentials of an Emergency Response Plan," provided by Phil Gervasi, President, Police Officers' Association, Clark County School District.

Exhibit G includes the written remarks of Brenda Kennedy, President, Nevada Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) (G₁), and supporting documents that describe the role of PTA (G₂).

Exhibit H includes three documents referred to by Senator Valerie Wiener, Alaska's statutory provisions, Section 14.33.100, "Required school crisis response planning" and "Making School Crisis Response Planning Work" (H₁), by Joseph A. Kinney, M.P.A., excerpted from *Association of Alaska School Boards - Commentary*; and "Early Warning, Timely Response, A Guide to Safe Schools" (H₂), all of which were provided by staff.

Exhibit I is the "Attendance Record" for this meeting.

Copies of the materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. You may contact the library at (775) 684-6827.