

A STUDY OF BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL SAFETY, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

# DESIGN FOR SAFE AND HEALTHY CHILDREN



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# MEET THE TEAM



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# A SCHOOL IS NOT A PRISON





# WE CAN DO BETTER



Dunbar Senior High School | 1970 to 2013



Dunbar Senior High School | Today





**RESEARCH GOAL**



# CARING FOR THE WHOLE CHILD





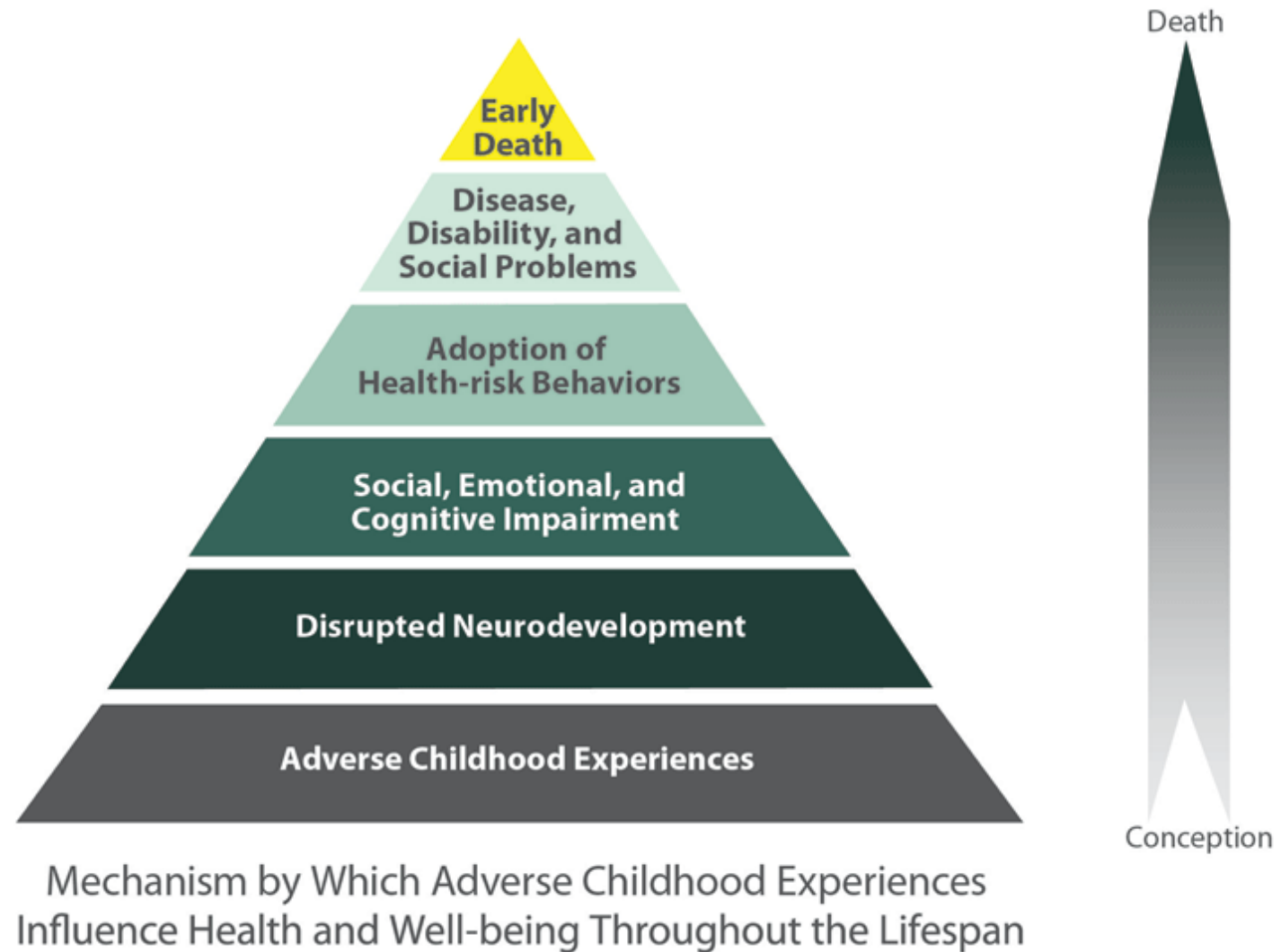
“A person is a person,  
no matter how small.”

**Dr. Seuss**



# ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

- Physical, emotional, sexual abuse,
- Physical and emotional neglect,
- Growing up in a household with a parent who is mentally ill or substance-dependent,
- Incarceration of a parent or caregiver
- Death of a parent or caregiver
- Parental divorce or separation,
- Domestic violence.





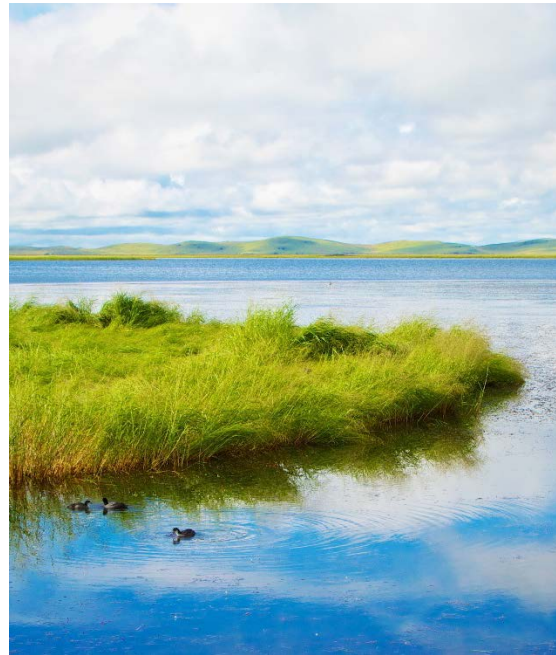
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# LACK OF CONNECTION

**From other people**



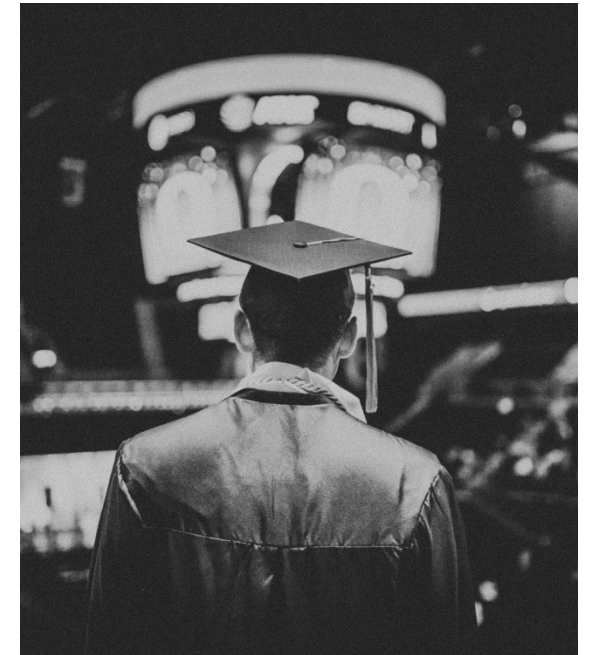
**From nature**



**From status or respect**



**From hope for a secure future**



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# TOXIC STRESS

High levels of stress cause significant physiological changes including changes in:

- Brain development
- Immune system development
- Hormonal systems

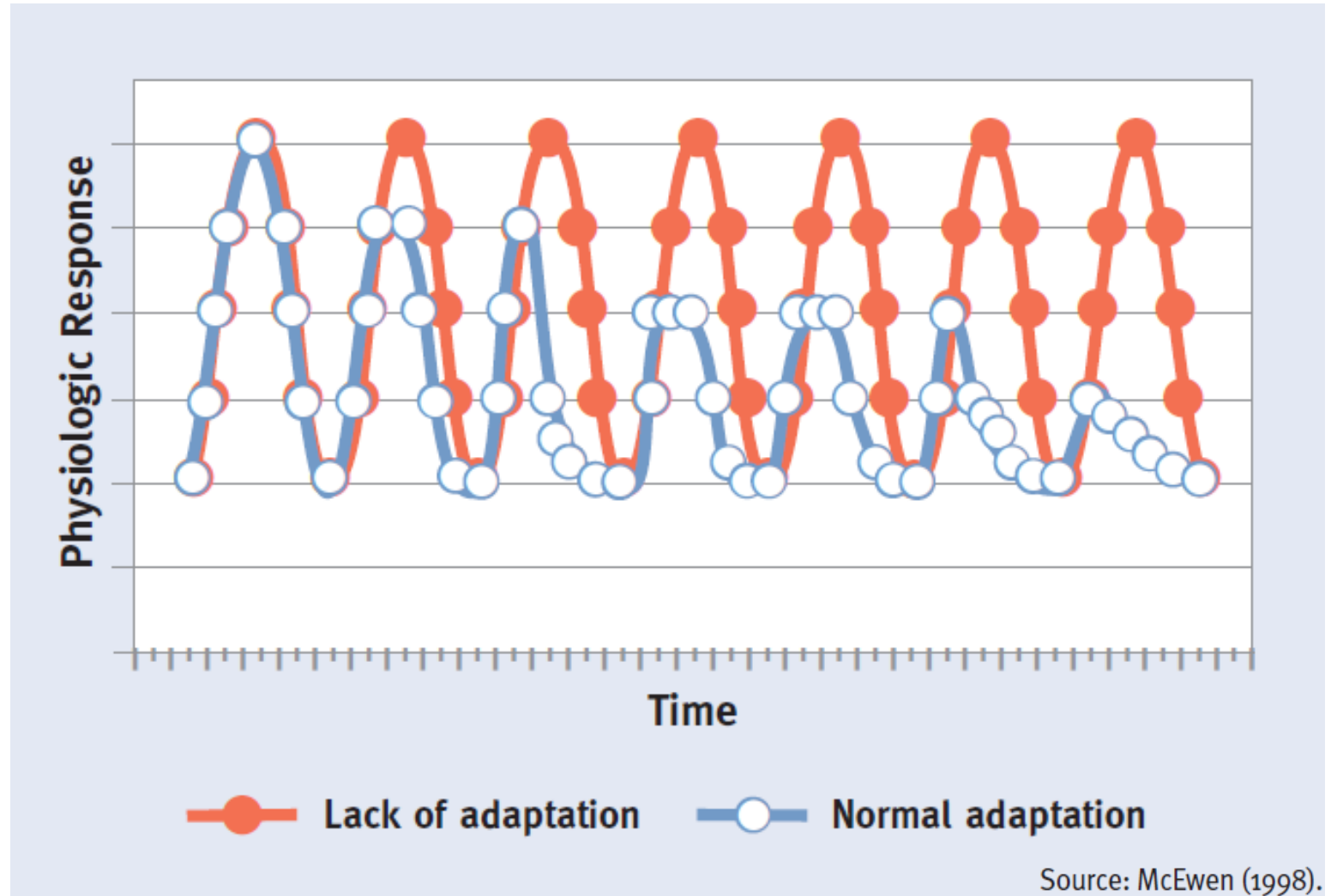




# TOXIC STRESS

“We've got to own it, and acknowledge that trauma is everyone's problem. This is not a poverty problem. This is not a race problem. This is a function of human biology. It is the way all of our bodies are wired. And now we can use this science to improve outcomes for everyone.”

*Dr. Nadine Burke-Harris, CEO of the Center for Youth Wellness*



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# RESILIENCE

“Children who end up doing well have had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.”

*- Harvard University Center on the Developing Child*





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# DEVELOPING THE WHOLE CHILD

## WHAT TO REMEMBER

- Stress is a neurotoxin
- We *can* help kids build resilience
- Cognition and emotion *are inextricably linked*
- Positive and supportive personal relationships are the key
- School policies and school buildings can contribute to the solution



# PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH



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# PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

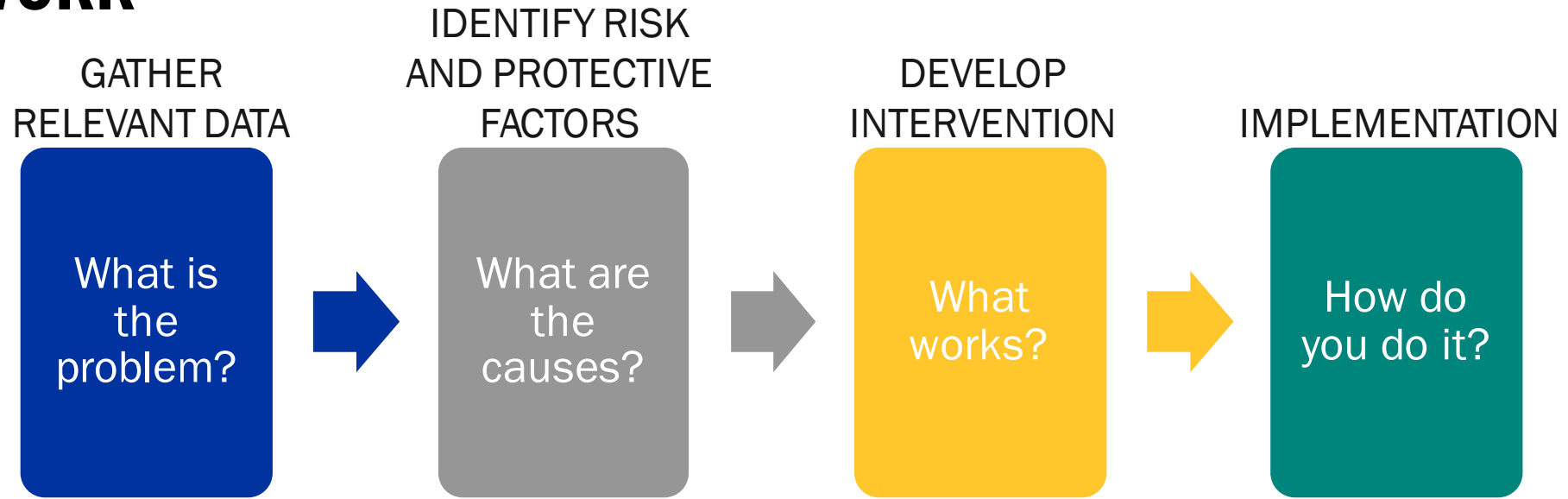
- The concept of modern public health has its origins in early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 1970s saw a renewed interest in the idea of public health which later developed into **epidemiology** with **interventions** aimed at **environment, human behavior and lifestyle**.
- **Prevention over reaction!**
- Similar principals can be applied to violence reduction and possibly preventing the violence from occurring in first place.



**Public Health**  
**Prevent. Promote. Protect.**

*Source: <https://www.naccho.org/communications/health-department-communications/public-health-logo>*

# PUBLIC HEALTH FRAMEWORK



<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/publichealthissue/publichealthapproach.html>

## Why is violence a health issue?

Because violence negatively affects the health of victims as well as those who witness violence; it can be effectively prevented using public health methods.



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# SYSTEMS APPROACH

“A public health approach seeks to understand how crime, risk of crime, impact of crime, and outcomes operate in complex dynamics, and where to intervene to shift that. This is a **systems approach**.

**Public Health Approach** is a mindset which takes a range of sciences and perspectives to understand the trends in crime and disorder in a population.

It is a **mindset of serving people by improving and protecting their health and wellbeing**. In its widest sense, safety from crime is a health issue” - Jim McManus, Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire County Council

(Source: <https://jimcmmanus.wordpress.com/2018/10/03/what-exactly-is-a-public-health-approach-to-crime-and-disorder-reduction/>)

# CHANGE FROM REACTION TO PREVENTION

## SCHOOL CLIMATE

- Physically & emotionally safe
- Positive school environments (protects from bullying, discrimination, harassment & assault)

## MENTAL HEALTH

- School & community-based mental health services
- Reform discipline (restorative justice & social emotional learning)

## THREAT ASSESSMENT

- Threat assessment teams (including principal, staff, mental health, and law enforcement partners)
- Practical channels of communication for persons to report potential threat

Source: <https://curry.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence>

Based on public health approach, the “Call for Action to prevent gun violence in United States of America” emphasized a **change of mindset and policy from reaction to prevention**





# WHY FEAR MATTERS

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# KEEPING RISK IN PERSPECTIVE

- Important to look at **facts** and try to keep **risk in perspective**
- Supportive **schools climates** and **culture** are more important then ever

# SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE

- School Climate and culture are **used interchangeably** however “school climate” refers to **individual experiences and feelings**, while “school culture” refers to **long-term physical and social environment as well as shared values or beliefs**.
- **National School Climate Center (NSCC)** has proposed the **13 Dimensions** of School Climate which are categories into **six major areas**:



Source: <https://www.schoolclimate.org/themes/schoolclimate/assets/pdf/measuring-school-climate-csci/CSCIDimensionChart-2017.pdf>



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# BENEFITS OF POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE

- Improvement in student grades (Wang et al. 2014)
- Positive school climate perceptions on improved grades was strongest for homeless youth and youth from one parent homes suggesting that school climate can act as protective factor (O'malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2014).
- Can help close achievement gaps by **alleviating the negative impact of poverty** (Astor, Benbenisty, & Estrada, 2009).
- **Protective factor against the development of risky student behavior** (Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012).
- **Lower rates of psychiatric problems** and drug use in high school students (Larusso, Romer, & Selman, 2008),
- **Reduced aggression and violence** (Gregory et al., 2010).
- **Decreased suspension** in high school (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011)
- Lower dropout rates (Barile et al., 2012)
- **Reduced bullying** behavior (birkett et al., 2009)
- Reductions in sexual harassment (attar-schwartz,2009)
- **Lessened emotional exhaustion**, depersonalization, and low feelings of personal accomplishment or school personel (grayson & alvarez, 2008; higgins-d'alessandro, 2002)
- **Minimizing affects on teacher attrition** (miller, brownell, & smith, 1999)

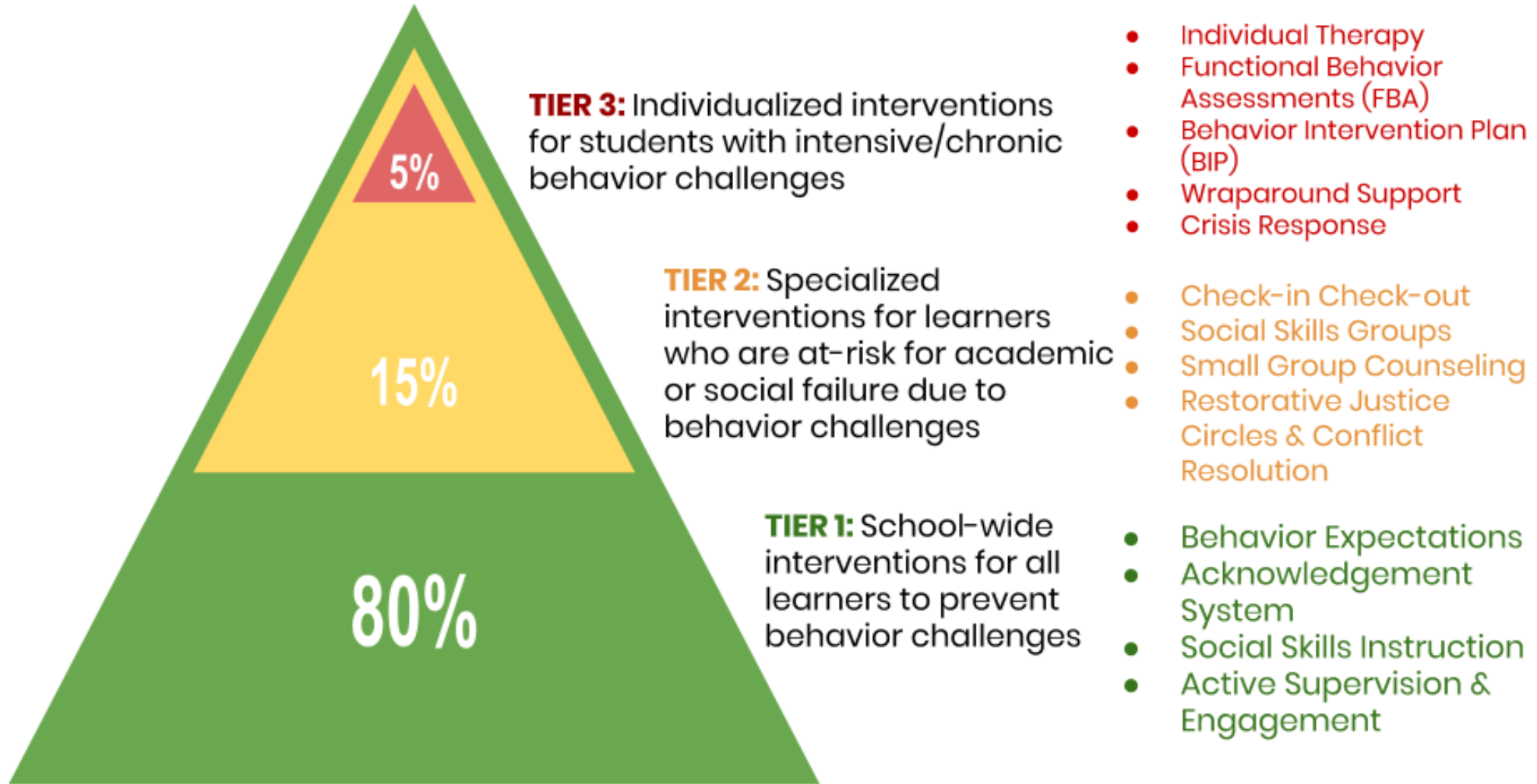
Source: <https://k12engagement.unl.edu/strategy-briefs/School%20Climate%20&%20Culture%202-6-16%20.pdf>

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# SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE

- Positive Behavioral Interventions and supports (PBIS)
- Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS)
- Compassionate Schools
- Calmer Choice
- Tools of Mind
- Positivity project
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) by CASEL
- Restorative Justice

# PBIS & SCHOOL CULTURE



Source: [https://www.mpusd.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=1012305&type=d&pREC\\_ID=1322797](https://www.mpusd.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1012305&type=d&pREC_ID=1322797)





# SAFETY RISKS & RESPONSES

# A SYNTHESIS OF SAFETY

PERKINS EASTMAN SAFETY/SECURITY STUDY

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- WHAT'S BEING SAID, WHERE IS THE FOCUS?

## LOOK AT DATA/STATISTICS

- WHAT DOES THE DATA SHOW?

## OUR SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS

- WHAT ARE SCHOOL'S SEEING?
- WHERE ARE THEY FOCUSING?
- WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS?

## A BALANCED APPROACH

- HARD & SOFT SOLUTIONS IN RESPONSE

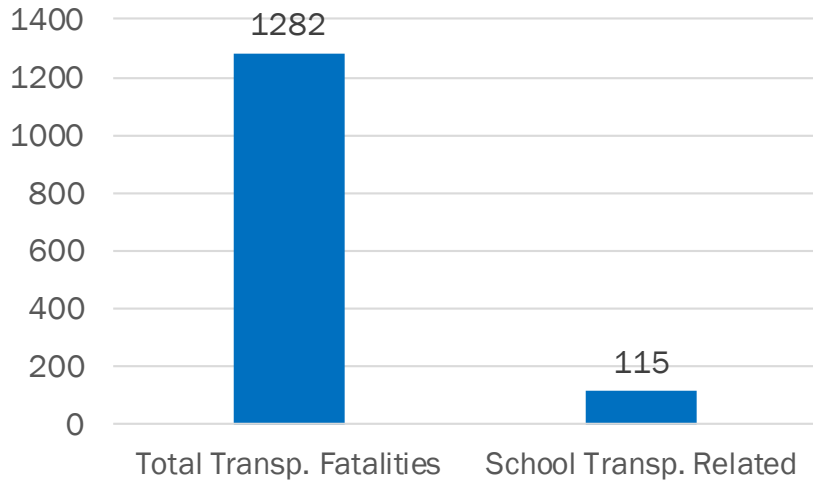


# RISKS IN PERSPECTIVE

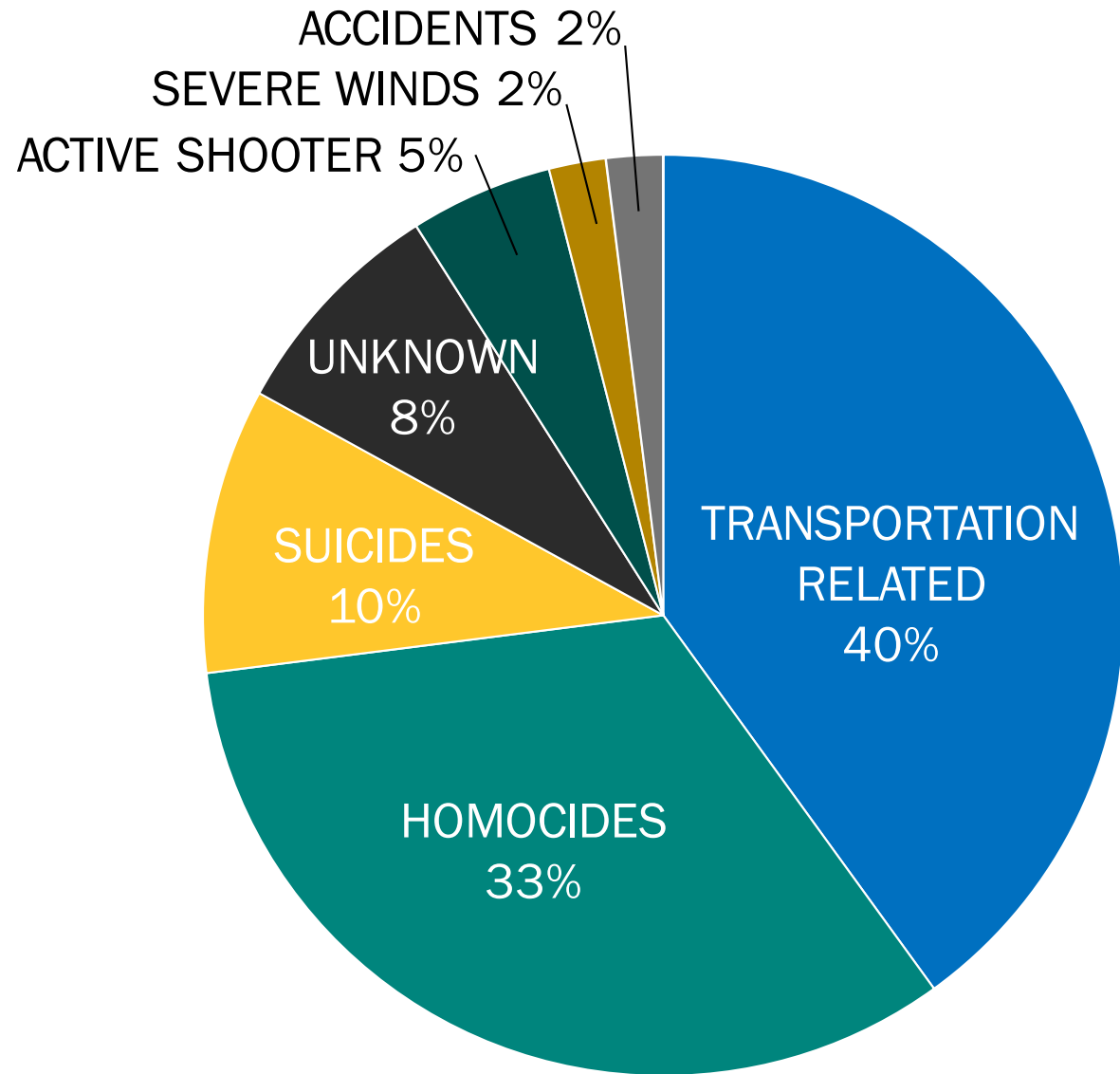
NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY STATISTICS/DATA

THE #1 CAUSE OF FATALITIES IS TRANSPORTATION RELATED

BUT STILL 11X SAFER THAN ALL OTHER TRANSPORTATION



INFORMATION ABOVE REPRESENTS '07-16 DATA FROM THE NHTSA; PIE-CHART '98-'12 DATA FROM 2014 REPORT BY SAFE HAVENS INTERNATIONAL





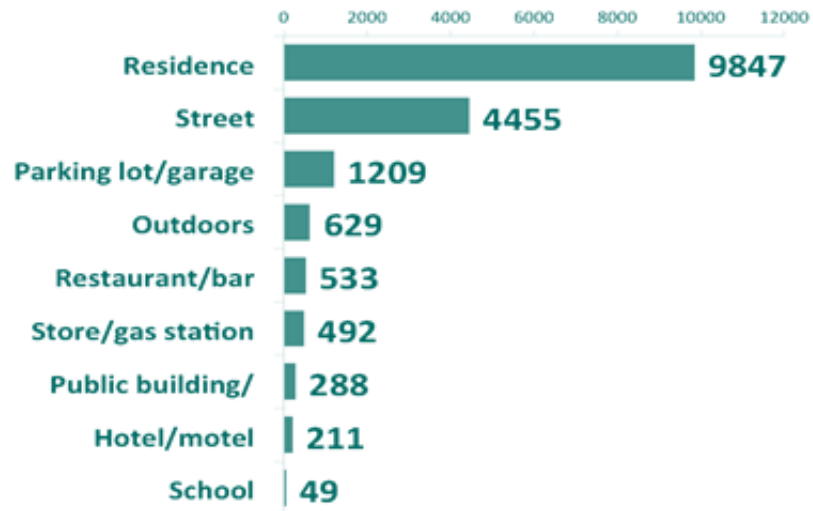
# RISKS IN PERSPECTIVE

NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY STATISTICS/DATA

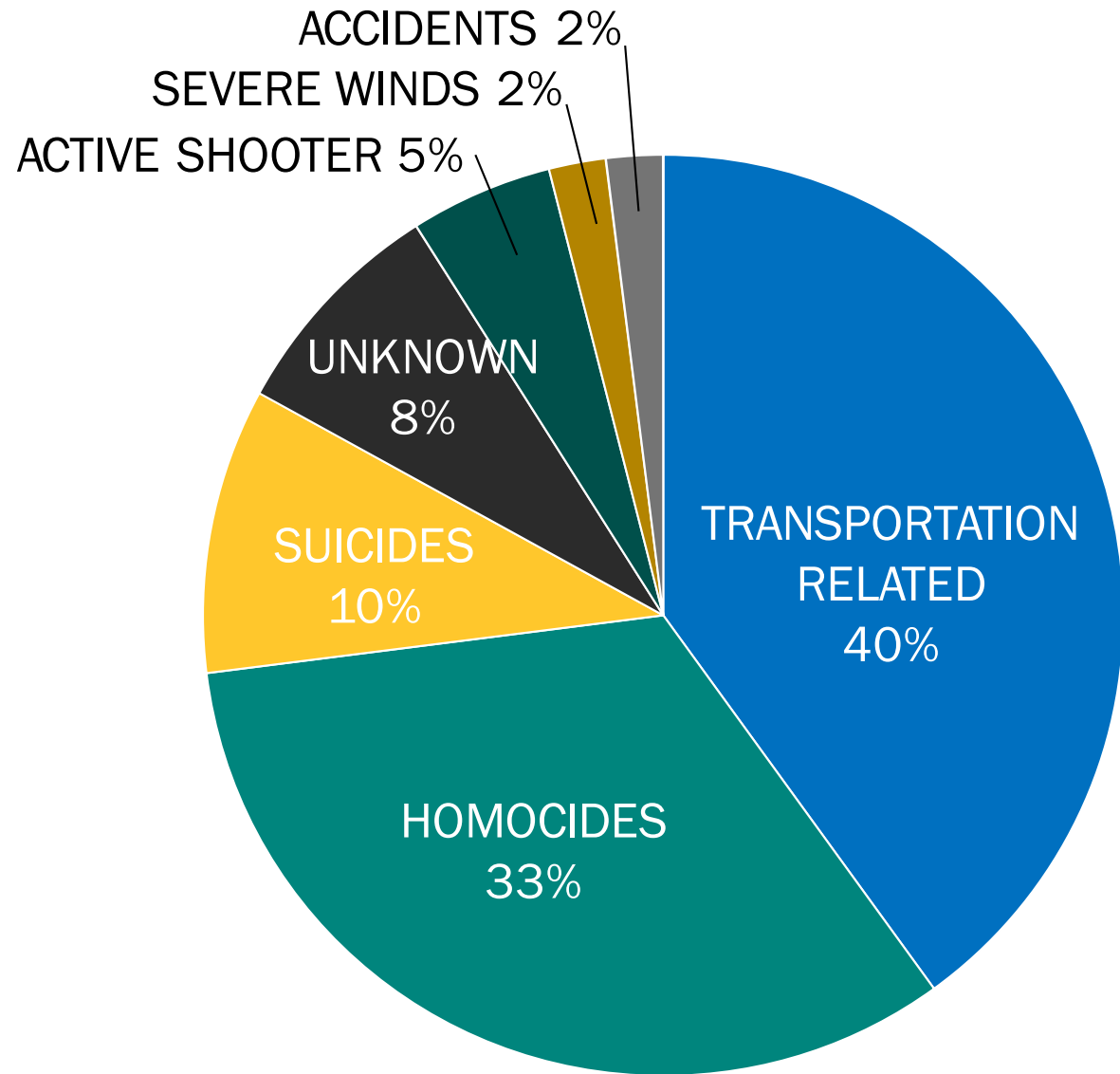
THE #1 CAUSE OF FATALITIES IS TRANSPORTATION RELATED

THE #2 CAUSE IS HOMICIDES (NON-ACTIVE SHOOTER)

STATISTICALLY RARE IN SCHOOLS, REPRESENTING 0.26%



2005-2010 HOMICIDE DATA OF 37 STATES FROM CORNELL & HUANG, 2015; PIE CHART '98-'12 DATA FROM 2014 REPORT BY SAFE HAVENS INTERNAT'L



# RISKS IN PERSPECTIVE

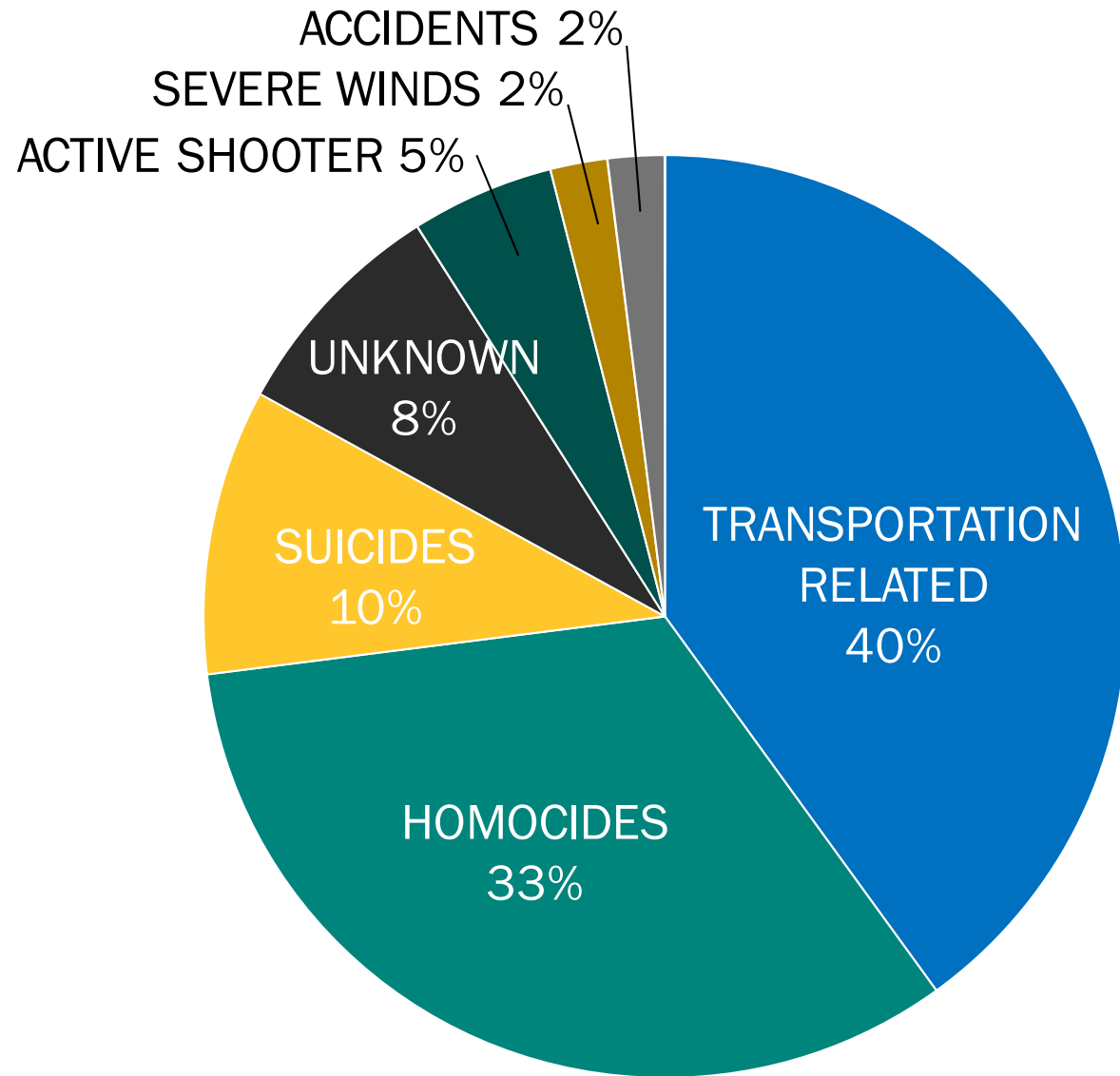
NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY STATISTICS/DATA

THE #1 CAUSE OF FATALITIES IS TRANSPORTATION RELATED

THE #2 CAUSE IS HOMICIDES (NON-ACTIVE SHOOTER)

ACTIVE SHOOTER FATALITIES ARE 3<sup>RD</sup> LOWEST OVERALL & EXCEEDS ONLY SEVERE WIND AND ACCIDENTS (NON-AUTO)

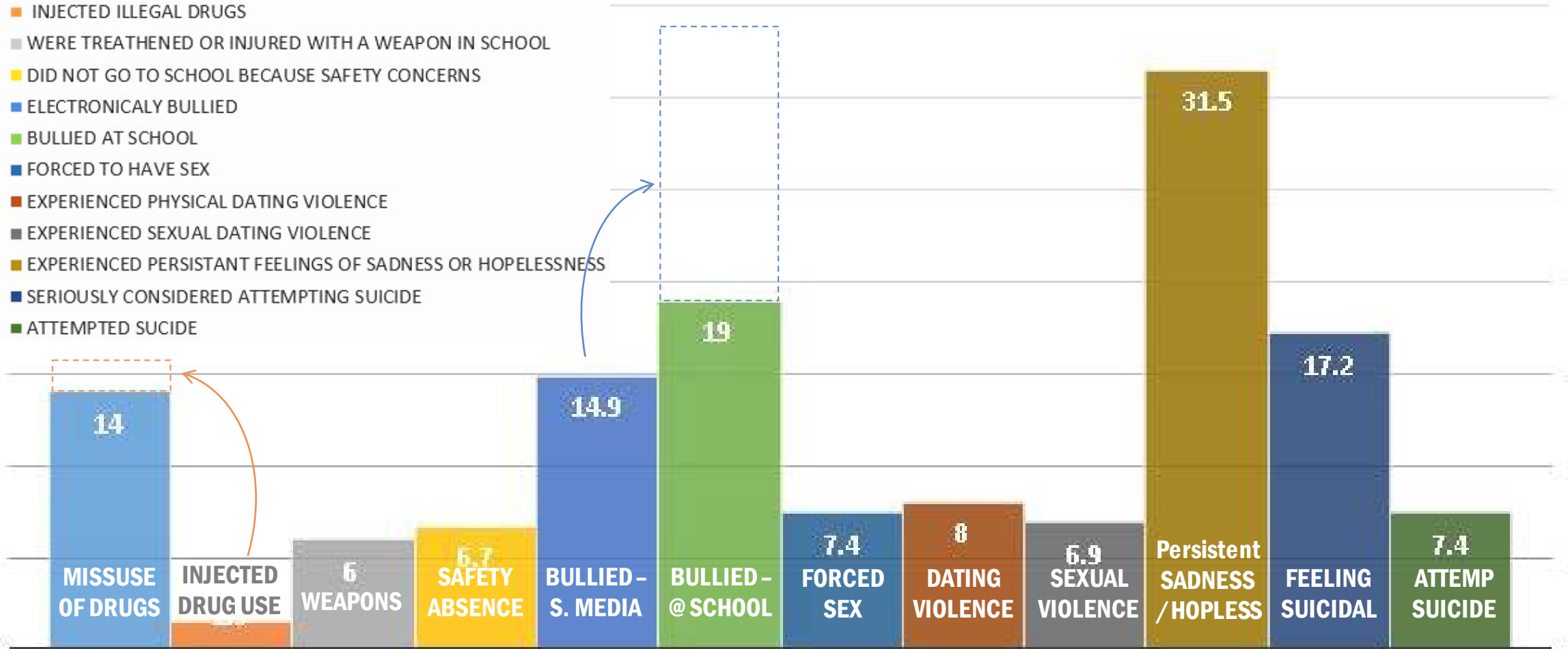
ACTIVE SHOOTER & OVERALL PIE-CHART '98-'12 DATA FROM 2014 REPORT BY SAFE HAVENS INTERNAT'L



# SAFETY CONCERNS SURVEY

## NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY STATISTICS/DATA

- USED SELECT ILLICIT DRUGS OR MISUSED PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS
- INJECTED ILLEGAL DRUGS
- WERE TREATHENED OR INJURED WITH A WEAPON IN SCHOOL
- DID NOT GO TO SCHOOL BECAUSE SAFETY CONCERNS
- ELECTRONICALLY BULLIED
- BULLIED AT SCHOOL
- FORCED TO HAVE SEX
- EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL DATING VIOLENCE
- EXPERIENCED SEXUAL DATING VIOLENCE
- EXPERIENCED PERSISTANT FEELINGS OF SADNESS OR HOPELESSNESS
- SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED ATTEMPTING SUICIDE
- ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

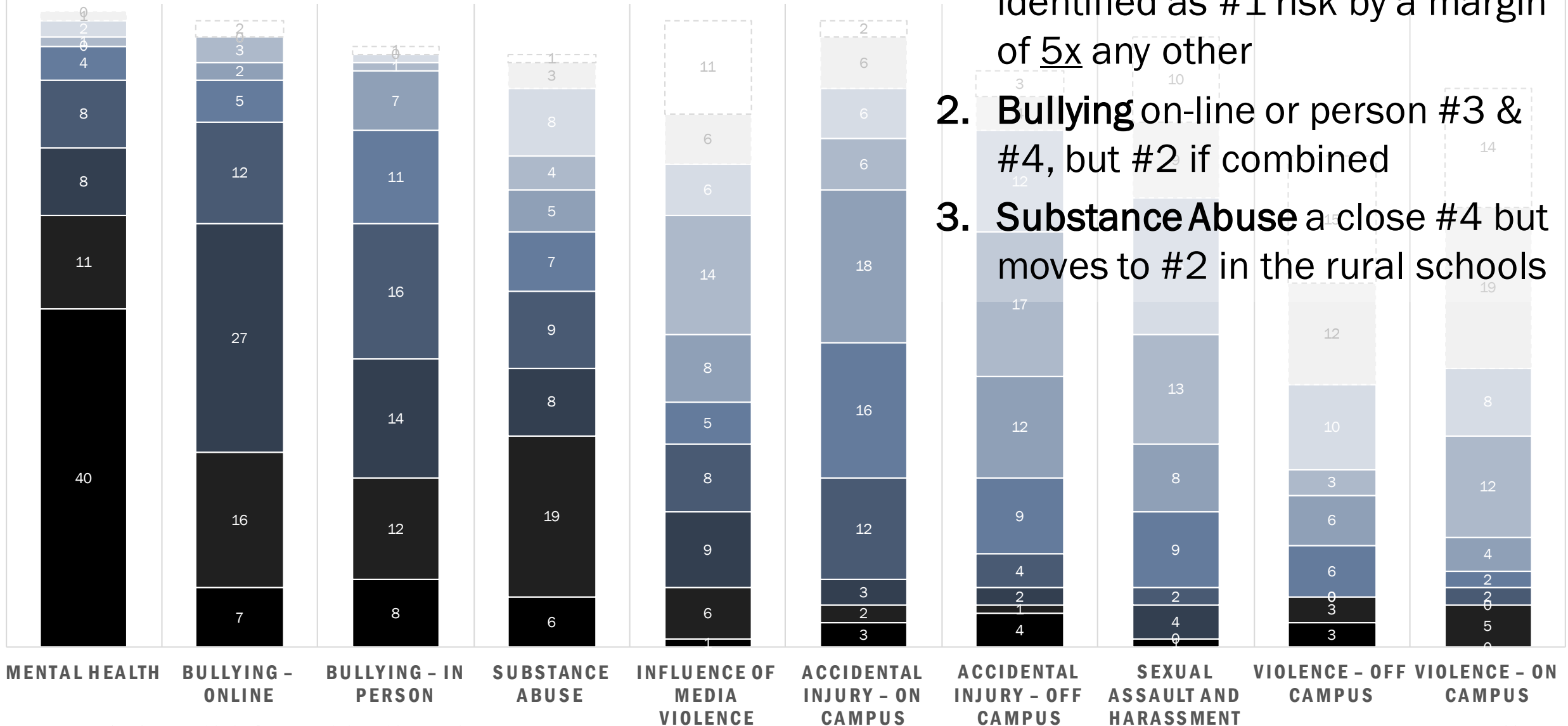


2017 CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data (2007-17)



# SAFETY CONCERNS OF TEACHERS

PERKINS EASTMAN SAFETY/SECURITY STUDY



1. **Mental Health Issues** were identified as #1 risk by a margin of 5x any other
2. **Bullying on-line or person #3 & #4**, but #2 if combined
3. **Substance Abuse** a close #4 but moves to #2 in the rural schools

# MENTAL HEALTH & BULLYING

PERKINS EASTMAN SAFETY/SECURITY STUDY

## How Are These Issues Known?

- Reported to Counselors & Teachers (requires good/open communication)\*
- Ambassador, Mentor or Peer Groups
- Planned Daily Observations
- Routine Surveys

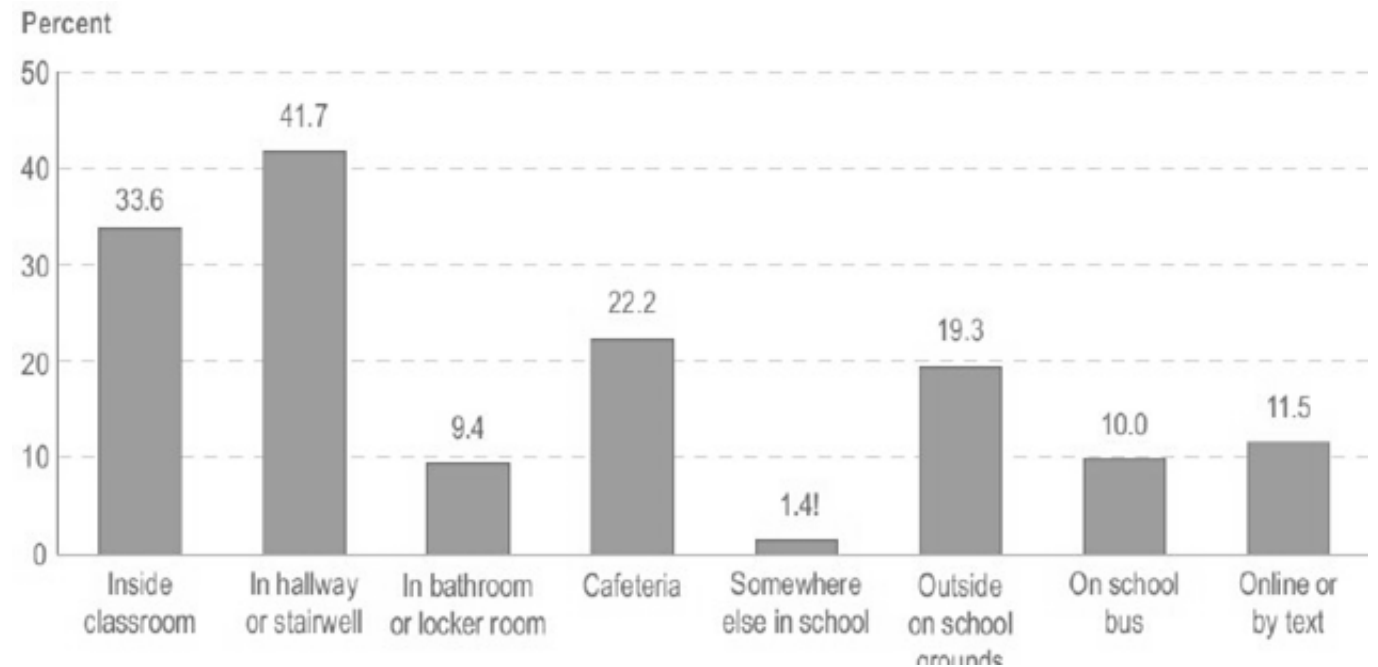
## What Defines Bullying?

- Separate From Meanness & Quarrels
- Follows Pattern/Is Repeated
- There is a Power Imbalance

\*Surveyed Schools (Suburban & Rural) Seem to have a healthy rapport between students and staff

## Where Does Bullying Occur?

2/3 of those surveyed generally agreed with the data; 1/3 disagreed, prioritizing gym/lockers, caf & toilet rms



2017-NCES Indicators of School Crime and Safety Report

# SCHOOL RESPONSES

## PERKINS EASTMAN SAFETY/SECURITY STUDY



### Locked Exterior

- All (Suburban & Rural) point to locked exterior & access protocols as the primary measure



### Practicing Drills

- Conducted 2 to 4x/year & only fire or lockdown
- Staff & students note feeling more prepared & safe as a result
- Noted having a different effect on those prone to anxiety or caught alone



### Surveillance

- Surveillance cameras were described as key behavioral modifiers
- Described as very useful in finding truths after reported incidents



### School Resource Officer

- Schools were split in whether they had SRO's
- All school's w/ SRO's cite a positive cultural impact
- Nationally, SRO's have mixed impact on culture

# SCHOOL RESPONSES

## PERKINS EASTMAN SAFETY/SECURITY STUDY



### Mental Health Therapists

- All schools surveyed report having a variety of specialists/counselors
- The survey reveals 1:100 counselor/student ratios (via 1:250 good practice)



### Specialty Programs

- Morning Meeting
- Ambassador, Mentor or Peer Programs
- Teaching Mindfulness, Yoga & Meditation to All
- Calmer Choice, PBIS or MTTS



### Threat Assessment Team

- Team reviews & updates safety/security protocols + preventative measures as an ongoing process
- Includes, Leadership & Key Staff (Mental Health noted by some schools)
- What about Kitch/Cust. & Transportation Reps?



### Greeting/Observation

- In Leadership Interviews several mentioned this as critical to knowing the students and detecting issues



- 
- 1. Transportation & Site Safety**
  - 2. Positive & Connected Culture**
  - 3. Mental Health / Supports**
  - 4. CPTED Principles, Plus**
  - 5. Policy & Preparedness**

# **BALANCED APPROACH**

# BALANCED APPROACH

## 1 ADDRESSING SITE/ TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IS ONE WAY TO ADDRESS THE LEADING CAUSE OF SCHOOL FATALITIES, BUT OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SITE ARE ALSO CRITICAL TO OVERALL SAFETY/SECURITY

■ DISTRICT ■ DESIGNER ■ COMMUNITY

*Some Examples Include:*

- Regular Transportation Inspections, Training & Inclusion As Part Of Threat Assessment Team(s)
- Staff Assisted Drop-off/Pick-ups
- Promote Biking/Walkability
- Develop Clear Entry/Approach & Wayfinding
- Traffic Separation; Bus, Car, Bike & Pedestrian
- Provide Cover & Ample Walkways/Widths
- Good Visibility & Lighting Throughout the Site
- Safe Routes To School
- Walking School Bus Programs
- Keeping Walkways & Paths Clear



# 1. SITE/TRANSPORTATION



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## BALANCED APPROACH

# CREATE A POSITIVE & CONNECTED SCHOOL CULTURE

**DATA SHOWS SCHOOL CLIMATE/CULTURE & THE WAY IT LOOKS/IS MAINTAINED IS THE #1 WAY TO PREVENT VIOLENCE & BULLYING**

### ■ DISTRICT ■ DESIGNER ■ COMMUNITY

*Some Examples Include:*

- Personally greeting/seeing all students daily
- Programs to empower/educate & connect students
- Student surveys or 1 on 1 time to detect isolation
- Follow good maintenance plan & procedures
- Create warm/welcoming environments
- Display student work & celebrate arts/culture
- School as small learning communities
- Plan placement of adults for interaction
- Informal learning & socializing spaces
- Transparency and natural supervision
- Low maintenance materials/finishes
- Active community use, adult-educ, seniors, PTO's...



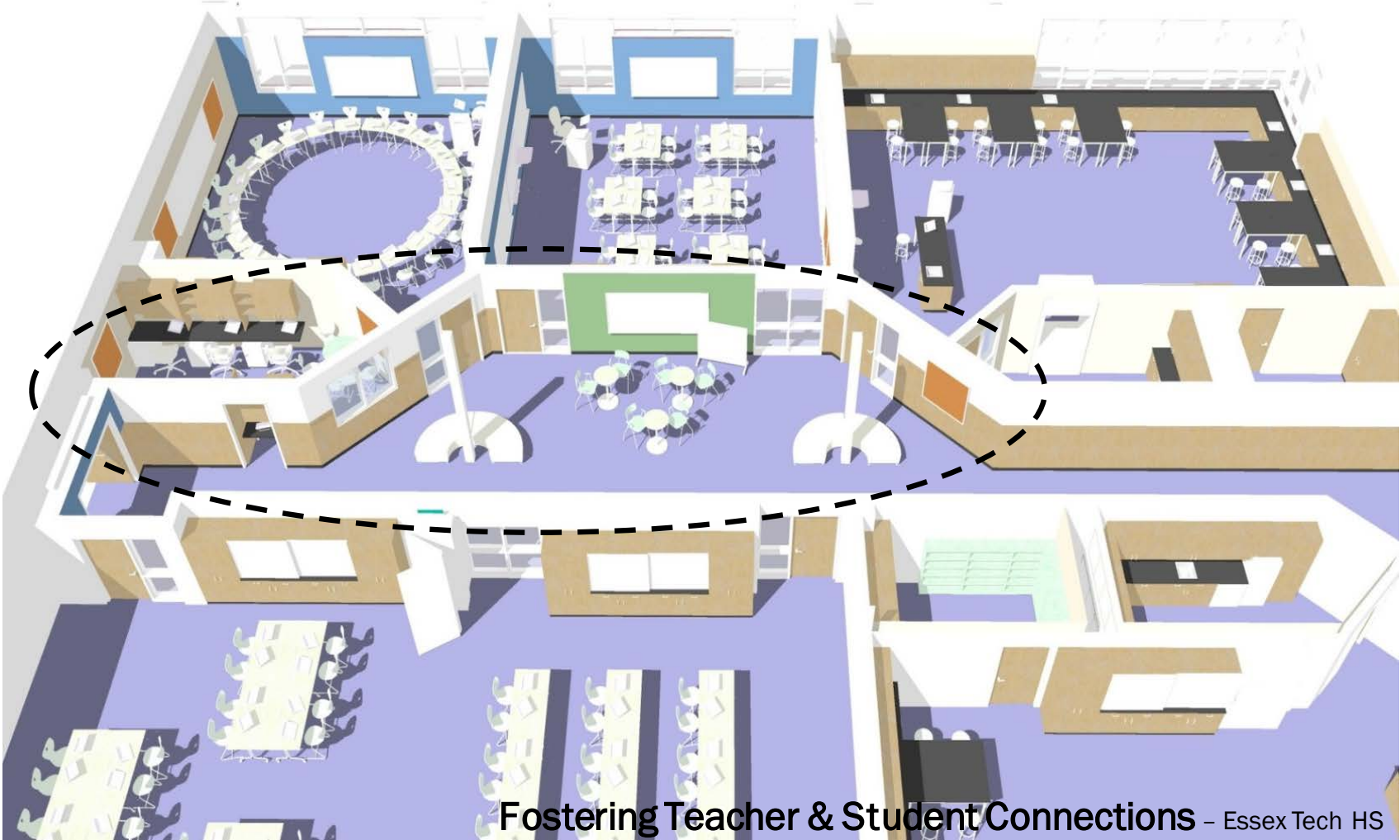
# 2. CONNECTED CULTURE



Warm/Welcoming – Essex Tech HS



Meaningful Murals & Display – Ron Brown HS



Fostering Teacher & Student Connections – Essex Tech HS



## 2. CONNECTED CULTURE



According to a 2018 study (Cook, Fiat, Larson 2018), starting the day off with a simple relationship-building activity—welcoming students at the **door**—can **increase academic engagement** by 20 percentage points while **decreasing disruptive behavior** by 9 percentage points



*“Interpersonal relationships between students and school staff affects school climate. For high-risk **elementary school students**, having adult support in school is significantly related to reduction in class bullying. Conversely, for **high-risk secondary students**, peer support is significantly related to reduction in class bullying*

*(Gage, Prykanowski & Larson, 2014).”*



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## BALANCED APPROACH



# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT & AWARENESS

**BIOPHILIC DESIGN INTENDS TO RECONNECT PEOPLE TO NATURE, ACT AS CALMING MEASURES AND HELP TO REDUCE STRESS BY INCORPORATING NATURAL MATERIALS, LIGHT, VIEWS, VEGETATION & OTHER NATURAL EXPERIENCES**

■ DISTRICT ■ DESIGNER ■ COMMUNITY

*Some Examples Include:*

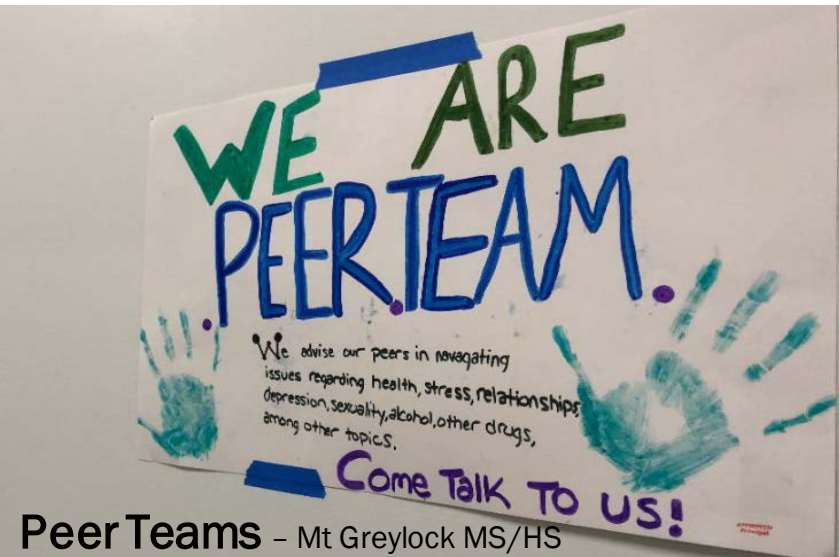
- Providing counselors at ratios better than standards at 1:250 (Study Seeing 1:100)
- Supplemental services for mental health needs
- Peer, ambassador & other programs (Like RBHS Morning Circle, Greylock Talks)
- Educate students on mindfulness, stress/anxiety
- Incorporate biophilic design principles to help instill a sense of calm and reduce stress
- Provide staff offices and work spaces throughout the school to encourage positive and casual interaction.



# MENTAL HEALTH/SUPPORT



Morning Meeting – Ron Brown HS



Peer Teams – Mt Greylock MS/HS



Living Wall, Rutgers Univ. – Ballinger



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# MENTAL HEALTH/ SUPPORT

Every Friday afternoon this teacher requests students:

- To **write down names of four children** with whom they'd like to sit the following week  
&
- To **nominate one student** who they believe has been exceptional classroom citizen that week



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# BALANCED APPROACH

## 4 ACCEPTED PRINCIPLES, LOCK-OFF LAYERS & ACTIVE MEASURES

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN IS ROOTED IN THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ENVIRONMENT CAN EFFECT BEHAVIOR. THE 4 PRINCIPLES INCLUDE (TERRITORY, NATURAL SURVEILLANCE, ACCESS CONTROL & MAINTENANCE) SUPPLEMENTED WITH INTERNAL LOCK-OFF LAYERS, & ACTIVE CONTROLS, COMMUNICATION

PERKINS EASTMAN 2019 A4LE.N.E. REGIONAL CONFERENCE

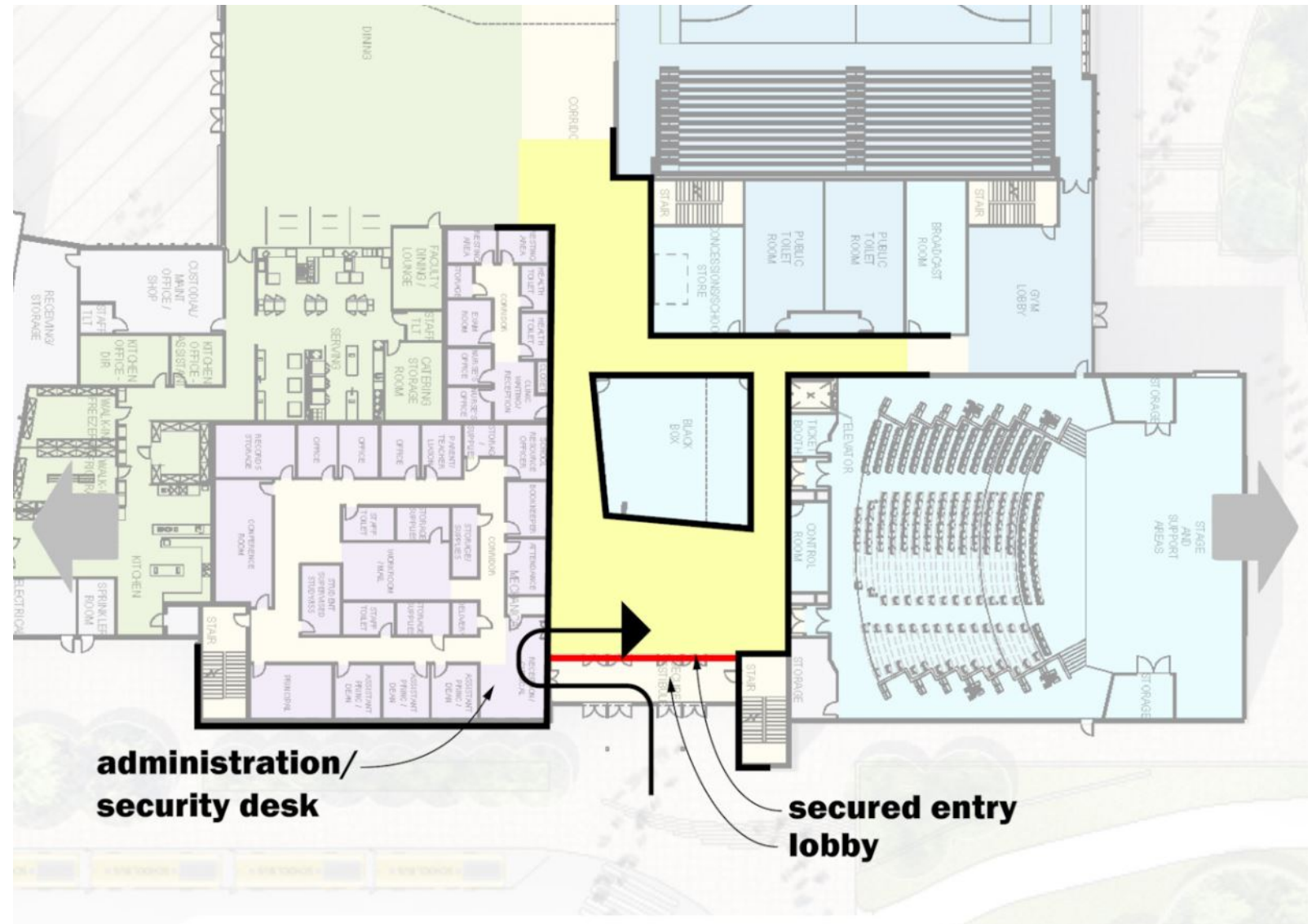
■ DISTRICT ■ DESIGNER ■ COMMUNITY

*Some Examples Include:*

- Entry/Access Protocol Must Involve Interaction/Ability To Read Behavior
- Define Territory, Wayfinding & Natural Surveillance
- Natural Bldg Protections (Grading, Landscape, Mullions to Prohibit Access or even 1-Way Glass)
- Clear/Controlled Entry Allowing Behavioral Read
- Lock-off Layers Within the Building
- Provide Safe Rooms For Security, Admin and Other Spaces More Readily Accessible
- Natural Out-of-Sight Zone or Retreat Area for All Spaces. Auto-Locking Doors; Don't Rely On Blinds

# CPTED PRINCIPLES

“Controlled access came up multiple times in our survey as an attribute that makes people feel safe”

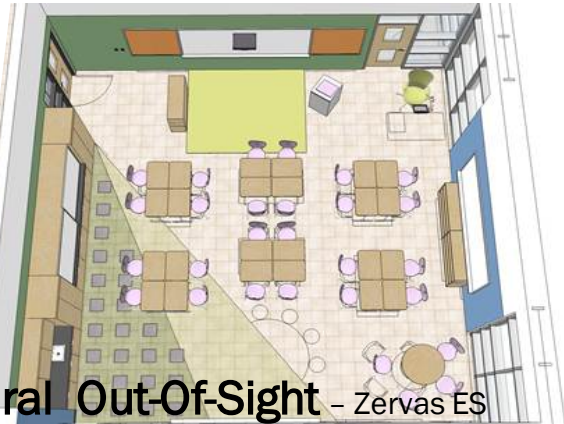




# CPTED PRINCIPLES



Lock-Off Layers – Ipswich ES Design



Natural Out-Of-Sight – Zervas ES



Natural Visibility Inside – Zervas ES



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## BALANCED APPROACH

# 5 POLICY INTEGRITY & PREPAREDNESS

**EVEN THE MOST SECURE FACILITY IS RENDERED VULNERABLE IF POLICIES ARE NOT FOLLOWED CONSISTENTLY.**

■ DISTRICT ■ DESIGNER ■ COMMUNITY

*Some Examples Include:*

- **Policies Must Have Integrity**; no holding doors for Strangers, or pegging them open during deliveries Or Other In/Out Conveniences
- **Threat Assessment/Team** (Continuously Examining); Again Surveys Are Helpful To Better Understand Bullying, Gang Activity, Drugs, Etc)
- **Supplemental Drills** (SHI emphasizes reverse evac, medical emergency, room clear and where to go). Practice calm, but deliberate walking, not running (More deaths via mob mentality, sometimes even when no real threat)
- **Behavioral Detection/De-escalation Training**

# POLICY & PREPARATION



Evacuation Drill – Spokane FD Video



Door Wedged Open – Fire Safety Lab



Threat Assessment Teams – Stock Photo



# KEY TAKEAWAYS



SCHOOL BUS

The image shows the rear of a yellow school bus. The bus has a black sign on the back that reads "SCHOOL BUS" in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. Above the sign are three red emergency lights. On either side of the sign are two sets of lights: a red light and a yellow light. The bus is parked outdoors, with green trees and a blue sky with white clouds in the background.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

**A Complete Approach to Safety/Security Combines:**

- **Mental Health Support**
- **Creating a Positive Culture**
- **Open/Good Communication**

**...with Passive, Active & Policy Measures**

The image shows the front of a school bus, with the words "SCHOOL BUS" clearly visible on the sign above the windshield. The bus is positioned at the bottom of the frame, and the background consists of a blurred landscape with trees and a cloudy sky. The overall image has a light, semi-transparent overlay.

SCHOOL BUS



Human by Design

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# MENTAL HEALTH

- According to the Centers for Disease Control, the **suicide rate** among children ages 10 to 17 **increased by 70 percent between 2006 and 2016**.
- About **72 percent** of children in the U.S. will have experienced **at least one traumatic event** such as witnessing violence, experiencing abuse, or experiencing the loss of a loved one before the age of 18.
- The majority of mental health needs first emerge during adolescence and are most effectively treated during this period.
- The data suggests **1 in 5 youth** will develop mental health difficulties, eventually warranting a diagnosis, and 1 in 10 youth will be affected by their mental health needs enough to require additional support services from schools. These mental health concerns can have serious impacts on students as they progress through school, and it contributes to nearly half of the youth eventually dropping out.
- Students are **21 times more likely to visit school-based health centers** for mental health than community mental health centers. This is especially true in low income districts where other resources are scarce. Therefore, school-based mental health providers (SBMH providers) — such as school counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists — are frequently the first to see children who are sick, stressed, traumatized, or hurt themselves or others