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COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Problem-Oriented Guides for Police
Problem-Specific Guides Series
No. 35

School Vandalism and Break-Ins

by Kelly Dedel Johnson





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School Vandalism and Break-Ins

Kelly Dedel Johnson

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About the Problem-Specific Guides Series

The *Problem-Specific Guides* summarize knowledge about how police can reduce the harm caused by specific crime and disorder problems. They are guides to prevention and to improving the overall response to incidents, not to investigating offenses or handling specific incidents. The guides are written for police-of whatever rank or assignment-who must address the specific problem the guides cover. The guides will be most useful to officers who:

- **Understand basic problem-oriented policing principles and methods.** The guides are not primers in problem-oriented policing. They deal only briefly with the initial decision to focus on a particular problem, methods to analyze the problem, and means to assess the results of a problem-oriented policing project. They are designed to help police decide how best to analyze and address a problem they have already identified. (A companion series of *Problem-Solving Tools* guides has been produced to aid in various aspects of problem analysis and assessment.)
 - **Can look at a problem in depth.** Depending on the complexity of the problem, you should be prepared to spend perhaps weeks, or even months, analyzing and responding to it. Carefully studying a problem before responding helps you design the right strategy, one that is most likely to work in your community. You should not blindly adopt the responses others have used; you must decide whether they are appropriate to your local situation. What is true in one place may not be true elsewhere; what works in one place may not work everywhere.
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- **Are willing to consider new ways of doing police business.** The guides describe responses that other police departments have used or that researchers have tested. While not all of these responses will be appropriate to your particular problem, they should help give a broader view of the kinds of things you could do. You may think you cannot implement some of these responses in your jurisdiction, but perhaps you can. In many places, when police have discovered a more effective response, they have succeeded in having laws and policies changed, improving the response to the problem.
 - **Understand the value and the limits of research knowledge.** For some types of problems, a lot of useful research is available to the police; for other problems, little is available. Accordingly, some guides in this series summarize existing research whereas other guides illustrate the need for more research on that particular problem. Regardless, research has not provided definitive answers to all the questions you might have about the problem. The research may help get you started in designing your own responses, but it cannot tell you exactly what to do. This will depend greatly on the particular nature of your local problem. In the interest of keeping the guides readable, not every piece of relevant research has been cited, nor has every point been attributed to its sources. To have done so would have overwhelmed and distracted the reader. The references listed at the end of each guide are those drawn on most heavily; they are not a complete bibliography of research on the subject.
-



- **Are willing to work with others to find effective solutions to the problem.** The police alone cannot implement many of the responses discussed in the guides. They must frequently implement them in partnership with other responsible private and public entities including other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private businesses, public utilities, community groups, and individual citizens. An effective problem-solver must know how to forge genuine partnerships with others and be prepared to invest considerable effort in making these partnerships work. Each guide identifies particular entities in the community with whom police might work to improve the overall response to that problem. Thorough analysis of problems often reveals that entities other than the police are in a stronger position to address problems and that police ought to shift some greater responsibility to them to do so.

The COPS Office defines community policing as "a policing philosophy that promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and police-community partnerships." These guides emphasize *problem-solving* and *police-community partnerships* in the context of addressing specific public safety problems. For the most part, the organizational strategies that can facilitate problem-solving and police-community partnerships vary considerably and discussion of them is beyond the scope of these guides.

These guides have drawn on research findings and police practices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. Even though laws, customs and police practices vary from country to country, it is apparent that



the police everywhere experience common problems. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important that police be aware of research and successful practices beyond the borders of their own countries.

The COPS Office and the authors encourage you to provide feedback on this guide and to report on your own agency's experiences dealing with a similar problem. Your agency may have effectively addressed a problem using responses not considered in these guides and your experiences and knowledge could benefit others. This information will be used to update the guides. If you wish to provide feedback and share your experiences it should be sent via e-mail to **cops_pubs@usdoj.gov**.

For more information about problem-oriented policing, visit the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing online at www.popcenter.org. This website offers free online access to:

- the *Problem-Specific Guides* series,
- the companion *Response Guides* and *Problem-Solving Tools* series,
- instructional information about problem-oriented policing and related topics,
- an interactive training exercise, and
- online access to important police research and practices.



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The principal project team developing the guide series comprised Herman Goldstein, professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin Law School; Ronald V. Clarke, professor of criminal justice, Rutgers University; John E. Eck, professor of criminal justice, University of Cincinnati; Michael S. Scott, clinical assistant professor, University of Wisconsin Law School; Rana Sampson, police consultant, San Diego; and Deborah Lamm Weisel, director of police research, North Carolina State University.

Cynthia Pappas oversaw the project for the COPS Office. Suzanne Fregly edited the guide. Research for the guides was conducted at the Criminal Justice Library at Rutgers University under the direction of Phyllis Schultze.

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The Problem of School Vandalism and Break-Ins

This guide addresses school vandalism and break-ins, describing the problem and reviewing the risk factors. It also discusses the associated problems of school burglaries and arson. The guide then identifies a series of questions to help you analyze your local problem. Finally, it reviews responses to the problem, and what is known about them from evaluative research and police practice.

The term *school vandalism* refers to willful or malicious damage to school grounds and buildings or furnishings and equipment. Specific examples include glass breakage, graffiti, and general property destruction. The term *school break-in* refers to an unauthorized entry into a school building when the school is closed (e.g., after hours, on weekends, on school holidays).

Related Problems

School vandalism and break-ins are similar to vandalism and break-ins elsewhere, and some of the responses discussed here may be effective in other settings. However, schools are unique environments; the factors underlying school vandalism and break-ins differ from those underlying similar acts elsewhere, and therefore must be analyzed separately. Related problems not addressed in this guide include:

- vandalism in non-school settings;
 - graffiti (see Guide No. 9 in this series);
 - arson;
 - school theft by students (e.g., of student backpacks and wallets);
-



- school theft by staff (e.g., of equipment);
- burglary of retail establishments (see Guide No. 15 in this series); and
- burglary of single-family houses (see Guide No. 18 in this series).

School break-ins typically fall into one of three categories:

- *Nuisance break-ins*, in which youth break into a school building, seemingly as an end in itself. They cause little serious damage and usually take nothing of value.
- *Professional break-ins*, in which offenders use a high level of skill to enter the school, break into storage rooms containing expensive equipment, and remove bulky items from the scene. They commit little incidental damage and may receive a lot of money for the stolen goods.
- *Malicious break-ins* entail significant damage to the school's interior and may include arson. Offenders sometimes destroy rather than steal items of value.¹

While school vandalism and break-ins generally comprise many often-trivial incidents, in the aggregate, they pose a serious problem for schools and communities, and the police and fire departments charged with protecting them. Many school fires originate as arson or during an act of vandalism.² Though less frequent than other types of school vandalism, arson has significant potential to harm students and staff. In the United Kingdom in 2000, approximately one-third of school arson fires occurred during school hours, when students were present, a significant proportional increase since 1990.³

Over the past two decades, concerns about school violence, weapons, drugs, and gangs have eclipsed concern



and discussion about school vandalism, its causes, and possible responses. However, even as concerns about student and staff safety from violence have become school administrators' top priority, vandalism and break-ins continue to occur regularly and to affect a significant proportion of U.S. schools. From 1996 to 1997, the incidence of murder, suicide, rape, assault with a weapon, and robbery at schools was very low.⁴ In contrast, over one-third of the nation's 84,000 public schools reported at least one incident of vandalism, totaling 99,000 separate incidents.⁵

David Corbett



Graffiti tagging and other forms of defacement often mark school buildings and grounds.

These statistics likely fail to reveal the magnitude of the problem. While the U.S. Department of Education, major education associations, and national organizations regularly compile data on school-related violence, weapons, and gang activity, they do not do so regarding school vandalism and break-ins. One reason for this may be that schools define vandalism very differently—some include both intentional and accidental damage, some report only those incidents that result in an insurance claim, and some include only those incidents for which insurance does not



cover the costs.⁶ School administrators may hesitate to report all cases of vandalism, break-ins, or arson because they view some as trivial, or because they fear it will reflect poorly on their management skills.⁷ Partially because of the failure to report, few perpetrators are apprehended, and even fewer are prosecuted.⁸

The lack of consistency in reporting school vandalism and break-ins means that cost estimates are similarly imprecise. Vandalism costs are usually the result of numerous small incidents, rather than more-serious incidents. Various estimates reveal that the costs of school vandalism are both high and increasing.⁹ In 1970, costs of school vandalism in the United States were estimated at \$200 million, climbing to an estimated \$600 million in 1990.¹⁰ Not only does school vandalism have fiscal consequences associated with repairing or replacing damaged or stolen property and paying higher insurance premiums if schools are not self-insured, but it also takes its toll in terms of aspects such as difficulties in finding temporary accommodations and negative effects on student, staff, and community morale.

Not all incidents of vandalism and break-ins have the same effect on the school environment. Again, two useful dimensions for understanding the problem's impact are the monetary cost (where the repair charges are high), and the social cost (where the event has a significant negative impact on student, staff, and community morale). Events with high monetary and social costs typically occur less frequently than those with low monetary and social costs.¹¹



High—Social Cost—Low		
High—Monetary Cost—Low	Type I—High Social/High Monetary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Destruction of media center, computer lab• Destruction of school records• Vandalism resulting in school closure	Type II—Low Social/High Monetary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many broken windows• Cherry bomb(s) dropped in toilet(s)• Vandalism to vending machines
	Type III—High Social/Low Monetary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hate-motivated graffiti• Gang-related graffiti• Killing of classroom animals	Type IV—Low Social/Low Monetary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turfed school grounds*• Tagger** or conventional graffiti• One broken window

Adapted from Vestermark and Blauvelt (1978)
**Refers to damage to school grounds caused by vehicles being driven across lawns and fields leaving deep tread marks.*
***Refers to high volume, non-gang graffiti, complex works of street art, and more isolated or spontaneous acts of graffiti.*

Factors Contributing to School Vandalism and Break-Ins

Understanding the factors that contribute to your problem will help you frame your own local analysis questions, determine good effectiveness measures, recognize key intervention points, and select appropriate responses.

Offender Characteristics

Those who vandalize or break into schools are typically young and male, acting in small groups. Vandalism and break-ins are most common among junior high school students, and become



less frequent as students reach high school.¹² Those involved in school-related arson are more likely to be in high school.¹³ Many vandals have done poorly academically, and may have been truant, suspended, or expelled.¹⁴ As is typical of many adolescents, students who vandalize and break into schools have a poor understanding of their behavior's impact on others, and are more concerned with the consequences to themselves.¹⁵ Offenders are no more likely to be emotionally disturbed than their peers who do not engage in the behavior, nor are they any more critical of their classes, teachers, or school in general.¹⁶

While the majority of students do not engage in vandalism, they do not generally harbor negative feelings toward those who do. In other words, "vandalism is a behavior that students can perform without the risk of condemnation by other students."¹⁷ Youth who lack full-time parental supervision during after-school hours have been found to be more involved in all types of delinquency than students whose parents are home when they return from school.¹⁸ In 2002-2003, 25 percent of all school-aged children were left to care for themselves after school, including half of children in grades 9 through 12 and one third of children in grades 6 through 8.¹⁹

Though far less frequently, adults sometimes commit school vandalism and break-ins. Most often, they do so to steal high-value items (e.g., computers, televisions, cameras) and sell them on the street.²⁰ Adults are far less likely to maliciously deface or destroy school property.



Motivations

The typical observer may think school vandalism and break-ins are pointless, particularly when the offenders have focused on property destruction and have taken nothing of value. One can better understand the behavior when considering it in the context of adolescence, when peer influence is a particularly powerful motivator. Most delinquent acts are carried out by groups of youths, and vandalism is no exception. Participating in vandalism often helps a youth to maintain or enhance his or her status among peers.²¹ This status comes with little risk since, in contrast to playing a game or fighting, there are no winners or losers.

Beyond peer influence, there are several other motivations for school vandalism:

- *Acquisitive vandalism* is committed to obtain property or money.
 - *Tactical vandalism* is used to accomplish goals such as getting school cancelled.
 - *Ideological vandalism* is oriented toward a social or political cause or message, such as a protest against school rules.
 - *Vindictive vandalism* (such as setting fire to the principal's office after being punished) is done to get revenge.
 - *Play vandalism* occurs when youth intentionally damage property during the course of play.
 - *Malicious vandalism* is used to express rage or frustration. Because of its viciousness and apparent senselessness, people find this type particularly difficult to understand.²²
-



As schools have become increasingly technologically equipped, thefts of electronic and high-tech goods have become more common.²³ Computers, VCRs, and DVD players are popular targets because they are relatively easy to resell. Students also steal more-mundane items such as food and school supplies, for their own use.

In addition, youth may participate in school vandalism or break-ins in a quest for excitement.²⁴ Some communities do not have constructive activities for youth during after-school hours and in the summer. Without structured alternatives, youth create their own fun, which may result in relatively minor vandalism or major property damage to schools and school grounds.

Times

A high proportion of vandalism occurs, quite naturally, when schools are unoccupied-before and after school hours, on weekends, and during vacations-as well as later in the school week and later in the school year.²⁵ Local factors, such as the community's use of school facilities after hours, may also determine when vandalism is most likely to occur in any one school.

Targets

Schools are prime targets for vandalism and break-ins for a number of reasons:

- They have high concentrations of potential offenders in high-risk age groups.



- They are easily accessible.
- They are symbols of social order and middle-class values.
- Some youth believe that public property belongs to no one, rather than to everyone.

Some schools are much more crime-prone than others, and repeat victimization is common.²⁶ A school's attractiveness as a vandalism target may also be related to its failure to meet some students' social, educational, and emotional needs; students may act out to express their displeasure or frustration.²⁷ Schools with either an oppressive or a hands-off administrative style, or those characterized as impersonal, unresponsive, and non-participatory, suffer from higher levels of vandalism and break-ins.²⁸ Conversely, in schools with lower vandalism rates,

- parents support disciplinary policies;
- students value teachers' opinions;
- teachers do not express hostile or authoritarian attitudes toward students;
- teachers do not use grades as a disciplinary tool;
- teachers have informal, cooperative, and fair dealings with the principal; and
- staff consistently and fairly enforce school rules.²⁹

Certain physical attributes of school buildings and grounds also affect their vulnerability to vandalism and break-ins. In general, large, modern, sprawling schools have higher rates of vandalism and break-ins than smaller, compact schools.³⁰ The modern, sprawling schools have large buildings scattered across campus, rather than clustered together. A school's architectural characteristics may also influence the quality of administrative and teacher-student relationships that are



developed, which can affect the school's vulnerability. Common vandalism locations and typical entry points include:³¹

- partially hidden areas around buildings that are large enough for small groups of students to hang out in (which can give rise to graffiti, damaged trees and plants, and broken windows);
- alcoves created by stairways adjacent to walls, depressed entrances, and delivery docks (which offer coverage for prying at windows, picking locks, and removing door hinges);
- main entrances not secured by grills or gates when school is closed, and secondary entrances with removable exterior door hardware;
- unsecured windows and skylights;
- large, smooth, light-colored walls (which are prime graffiti targets); and
- rooftops accessible from the ground, from nearby trees, or from other rooftops (which can allow access to damageable equipment and hardware).

David Corbett



Partially hidden entryways can provide opportunity for would-be vandals.



David Corbett



Rooftops that are accessible only from within the building provide a greater degree of security.

Vandals damage schools that neglect grounds and building maintenance, those whose grounds have little aesthetic appeal, and those that do not appear to be occupied or looked after more often than they damage carefully tended and preserved schools.³²



Understanding Your Local Problem

The information provided above is only a generalized description of school vandalism and break-ins. You must combine the basic facts with a more specific understanding of your local problem. Analyzing the local problem carefully will help you design a more effective response strategy.

Asking the Right Questions

The following are some critical questions you should ask in analyzing your particular problem of school vandalism and break-ins, even if the answers are not always readily available. Your answers to these and other questions will help you choose the most appropriate set of responses later on.

Traditionally, schools have focused almost exclusively on maintenance records for information on vandalism levels. These records should contain specific information on the location, type, entry method, time, suspected perpetrators, and other details essential to developing informed responses. Further, schools should report all incidents of vandalism and burglary, no matter how trivial, so that an assessment of the impact on individual schools and entire districts can be done.

New technology for mapping and analyzing incidents that occur in and around schools can reveal patterns and suggest possible reasons for them. The analysis should be as specific as possible to allow for precision in developing responses.[†]

You can get some of the answers needed to understand your local problem from school risk assessments the police and fire departments have done. These assessments are primarily concerned with a school's physical environment, building(s), grounds, policies, procedures, personnel, and technology, but also may address the social and academic environments

[†] The School Crime Operations Package (School COP) is a free software program for entering, mapping, and analyzing incidents that occur in and around schools. Developed by Abt Associates under a contract with the National Institute of Justice, the software is available at <http://www.schoolcopsoftware.com/index.htm>.



relevant to crime prevention.[†] Student and staff surveys are also useful for gaining insight into how the problem takes shape in your jurisdiction.

[†] Atkinson (2002) created a guide for fostering school partnerships with law enforcement, and for using the SARA model to analyze various crime problems affecting schools. Sample school assessments are provided by Schneider, Walker, and Sprague (2000), and in the National Crime Prevention Council's (2003) *School Safety and Security Toolkit*, available at http://www.ncpc.org/cms/cms-upload/ncpc/files/BSSToolkit_Complete.pdf.

Beyond the physical security that armed, uniformed school resource officers (SROs) can provide, they are also excellent sources of information about the size of, scope of, and current responses to the problem. Because SROs from different schools are well connected to each other, they bring a system-wide or regional perspective to the information-gathering process.

Incidents

- How many school vandalism incidents were reported to the police in the past year? How many weren't? Why weren't they?
- How many school break-ins were reported to the police? How many weren't? Why weren't they?
- How many school fires were reported to the police and fire departments? How many weren't? Why weren't they?
- What were the repair and replacement costs for all incidents?
- Were the costs generally spread out among many smaller incidents, or concentrated among a few larger incidents?

Targets

- How accessible are school grounds and buildings? What type of fencing exists? How visible are building entrances?
 - What, specifically, is being damaged?
 - What are the characteristics of the main entry points for unauthorized access to the school buildings?
 - What are the characteristics of the main areas of the school's interior that are damaged?
-



- What is being stolen during break-ins? From where in the school? Who has legitimate access to the area(s) when the incidents occur?
- How are stolen goods being disposed of (sold for cash, traded for other goods, used by thieves)?
- Where are most fires started?
- What materials are used to start fires? Are materials obtained on-site or brought in from outside? Are accelerants used?

Offenders

- For what proportion of incidents are offenders apprehended? What are their characteristics (e.g., age, gender, grade, school of attendance)? What proportions are students versus non-students?
- Do offenders operate alone or in groups? How active are they? Do they re-offend even after getting caught?
- How do they travel to and from the school?
- What reasons do students offer for why youth engage in school vandalism and break-ins? Do students view peers who engage in vandalism and break-ins negatively? If not, why?
- What reasons do offenders give for their behavior?
- How motivated to damage school property do offenders seem to be? How sophisticated are they?

Times

- At what times of the day do vandalism, break-ins, and arson occur? On what days of the week? At what times of the year?
 - Do these times correspond with other events?
 - Are incidents clustered in time, or spread over time?
-



Community Characteristics

- What are the surrounding community's characteristics (e.g., isolated or active, commercial or residential)?
- How concerned are community members about the problem? How willing are they to get involved in solving it?
- What characterizes the media's coverage of the problem (if there is any)?
- What types of community activities occur in the school(s) after hours? How is access to the rest of the building limited during these times? To what extent do vandalism incidents correspond with the activities?

Current Responses

- What are the current practices regarding surveillance (either electronic or human) of grounds and buildings after hours?
 - How are the school entrances secured after hours? How are windows secured?
 - What types of alarms, sensors, and security cameras are used? What building areas do they cover?
 - What valuable equipment does the school own? How is it stored? Who can access it, and how so?
 - How quickly is property damage repaired?
 - What are the schools' insurance arrangements? What actions, if any, have insurance loss-prevention agents recommended to school officials?
 - What school sanctions are used against apprehended offenders? What criminal justice sanctions are used? How do parents respond?
-



Measuring Your Effectiveness

Measurement allows you to determine to what degree your efforts have succeeded, and suggests how you might modify your responses if they are not producing the intended results. You should take measures of your problem *before* you implement responses, to determine how serious the problem is, and *after* you implement them, to determine whether they have been effective. All measures should be taken in both the target area and the surrounding area. (For more detailed guidance on measuring effectiveness, see the companion guide to this series, *Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers*.)

Regular monitoring is vital to developing a clear understanding of how each response affects school vandalism and break-ins. You should modify or discontinue ineffective responses. Event- and response-level monitoring requires a quality information system that includes specific details about the acts, the perpetrators, and the contextual factors, as well as data on how and when the responses were implemented.

The following are potentially useful measures of the effectiveness of responses to school vandalism and break-ins:

- decreased number of incidents of vandalism directed at exterior of school buildings or grounds;
 - decreased number of incidents of vandalism directed at interior of school buildings;
 - decreased amount and/or value of equipment stolen;
 - decreased number of fires set intentionally;
 - decreased frequency of incidents of vandalism and break-ins (e.g., from weekly to monthly);
-



- decreased total costs of repairing damaged property and replacing stolen equipment; and
- decreased insurance premiums (if applicable).

Some additional measures that, while not directly indicating effectiveness, may suggest that the situation is improving include:

- increased percentage of incidents reported to police;
- decreased student tolerance regarding school vandalism and break-ins;
- increased number of tips received from students and residents;
- increased proportion of incidents for which offender is caught; and
- increased amount of restitution ordered and paid.



Responses to the Problem of School Vandalism and Break-Ins

Your analysis of your local problem should give you a better understanding of the factors contributing to it. Once you have analyzed your local problem and established a baseline for measuring effectiveness, you should consider possible responses to address the problem.

The following response strategies provide a foundation of ideas for addressing your particular problem. These strategies are drawn from a variety of research studies and police reports. Several of these strategies may apply to your community's problem. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem. Do not limit yourself to considering what police can do; give careful consideration to who else in your community shares responsibility for the problem and can help police better respond to it.

† In a project that applied situational crime prevention to school vandalism in Manchester, England, the task force narrowly defined school vandalism as a “building security problem,” which led to their selecting target-hardening measures only, to the detriment of the initiative’s effectiveness (Barker and Bridgeman 1994).

General Considerations for an Effective Response Strategy

- 1. Recognizing the person-environment interaction.** School vandalism and break-ins are the combined results of the offenders' characteristics and those of the physical and social environment in which the behavior occurs. This means that responses must focus on both the person and the environment. Focusing on one but not on the other will prove ineffective.†
-



† The Southampton (England) Safer Schools project employed a diverse range of responses to combat problems with vandalism and burglary on school property. The responses included improvements to the schools' design and layout, student- and staff-focused awareness activities, and opportunities for community engagement. Over an 18-month period, there was a 90 percent reduction in reported burglary and damage, and a 75 percent reduction in damage-repair expenditures (Hampshire Constabulary 2004).

Physical measures to improve building security have great appeal. Their use is already widespread in many places, is easy to understand, and usually involves a one-time outlay of funds. In contrast, measures focused on offenders, new administrative practices or policies, and community involvement appear to be more complex and difficult to implement. It may be difficult to gain group consensus on more-complex responses; however, the initiative's overall balance depends on it.³³

The large number of possible responses can be overwhelming. For this reason, they are categorized into four main sections: those that impact the physical environment, those that impact the offender, those that focus on school administrative practices, and those that enlist the community's help. The overall initiative should include a balance of responses in each category, and should use the most potent combinations.[†] Finally, responses should be implemented with great sensitivity to the goal of creating schools that are inviting public institutions. The cumulative effect of multiple responses can make schools appear fortress-like.

- 2. Establishing a task force.** While police clearly have a role in preventing and responding to school vandalism and break-ins, these problems are shared by school administrators and community residents who, as taxpayers, indirectly pay for repairs and replacements. Task forces should include broad representation from all groups who can help to define the problem, particularly students, teachers, custodians, and school security officers, and those who will be instrumental in crafting and implementing responses, including local and district-level school administrators, counselors, architects,



security consultants, crime prevention officers, firefighters, maintenance contractors, and community representatives.[†] It is vital that students be involved in the problem-solving effort, including school leaders and more-marginalized students.^{††} A coordinator is often needed to organize the various stakeholders' efforts, and to ensure that all of the selected responses are implemented according to design.^{†††}

3. **Using the media wisely.** News stories, advertising, slogans, and posters are all effective ways to transmit information to the community about the impact of school vandalism and break-ins. Using student-based information sources, such as school newspapers, student councils, athletic events, and parent newsletters, can also help to ensure that the messages reach the intended audiences.³⁴ However, there is a risk that media attention might promote the concept of achieving notoriety through high-profile crimes against school property.³⁵ Thus, journalists should avoid sensationalizing the events, and focus instead on the resources being squandered and the loss experienced by students, as well as the consequences faced by offenders.

4. **Setting priorities.** It is impossible to address every vulnerability at a school. Examining the relationship between the monetary and social costs of specific instances of vandalism, burglary, or arson can be useful in setting strategic priorities among your responses. In general, protecting high-value items, administrative areas, computer and technology labs, computer system hubs, clinics, libraries, and band rooms will mitigate the risk of events with high financial and social costs.³⁶

† The National Crime Prevention Council's *School Safety and Security Toolkit* includes detailed information on forming an action team, identifying problems, and developing action plans. The toolkit also includes sample surveys for parents, administrators, and students, as well as a sample school-safety assessment.

†† The Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.) Police Department implemented a school safety program in which students were taught problem-solving skills and applied them to a range of school safety issues. Teachers served as facilitators, and the school resource officer served as an information source, offering expertise in dealing with crime and disorder. While none of the projects dealt with vandalism specifically, one could apply the process to it (Kenney and Watson 1999).

††† Though well-planned, an initiative to combat school vandalism in Manchester, England, suffered from the absence of someone to coordinate the overall implementation. Only 15 of 30 targeted responses were implemented, which severely compromised the initiative's effectiveness (Barker and Bridgeman 1994).



† There are numerous mechanical and electronic fixtures to deter unauthorized entry. See Schneider, Walker, and Sprague (2000) for a description of the full array of options.

- 5. Operating at the district level.** Public schools are administered at a district level, and district administrators may hesitate to grant individual schools the autonomy to implement the suggested responses on their own. Instead, districts may choose to resolve problems on a large scale, while individual schools fine-tune responses to address their particular conditions. A district-wide approach may be more efficient than individual schools' efforts to address the problem.

Specific Responses to School Vandalism and Break-Ins

Changes to the Physical Environment

- 6. Controlling access to deter unauthorized entry.** Gates, deadbolt locks on doors and windows, door and window shutters, and doors that open only from the inside are effective means of securing school buildings. Access can also be deterred by limiting the number of entry points in school buildings, and by planting thorny bushes and un-climbable trees near entry points. Movable gates can be used indoors to secure sections of the building, while also permitting community use of facilities after hours.† Such measures can also delay intruders' efforts to get away. The potential effectiveness of this response decreases with inconsistent or improper use of the hardware. Some jurisdictions assign a teacher or other staff member to check all locks and gates at the end of each day.³⁷

Intruder alarms, motion sensors, heat sensors, and glass-break sensors are useful for quickly detecting unauthorized entry. Because putting alarms and



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Barriers such as interior gates can help keep unauthorized persons out of areas vulnerable to theft or vandalism after hours.

sensors throughout the school is likely to be cost-prohibitive, focusing on passageways to different parts of the building, and on areas where valuable equipment and records are stored, is most effective. Alarm signals should be sent to police, on-campus security posts, and the school principal.³⁸ However, alarm systems are prone to high rates of false alarms, which not only cost the school if a fine is imposed, but also waste police resources. Faulty or inappropriately selected equipment, poor installation, and user error are the main causes of false alarms.³⁹

- 7. Posting warning signs.** Access-control signs are an important part of "rule setting" in that they establish the types of activities prohibited both during and after



school, and notify potential intruders that they are under surveillance. School territory and permitted uses can also be established through the strategic use of gardens, designated picnic areas, and student artwork.⁴⁰ These features indicate that the school buildings and grounds are both cared for and controlled.

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Signs clearly stating school procedure and policy can increase awareness of rules while removing ambiguity and ignorance as excuses for improper behavior.

- 8. Storing valuables in secure areas.** Storing high-value audio-visual equipment and computers in rooms equipped with high-quality locks, in the inner section of the building, makes them harder to access. Further, using carts to move expensive equipment to a central storage room can reduce the number of rooms that need to be secured. Bolting computers to lab and office desks makes their removal more difficult and time-consuming. Equipping storage areas with smoke detectors linked to the fire department ensures a quick response in case of fire. Removing signs indicating the location of expensive equipment (e.g., A-V STORAGE ROOM or COMPUTER LAB) is also advisable.⁴¹



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Consolidating valuable equipment in a secure area when not in use is an effective method of preventing theft.

† Your police department may have an Operation ID program for inscribing equipment. The program is usually free, the inscription is visible but not unattractive, and the police keep records of the identification numbers.

9. **Reducing the availability of combustibles.** Most arson fires are started with materials found on-site.⁴² For this reason, indoor and outdoor trash cans should be emptied regularly, and any flammable chemicals in science labs and maintenance storage areas should always be properly secured.
 10. **Inscribing valuables with identifying marks.** It is harder to sell stolen goods that have permanent identifying marks on them. Engraving, stenciling, or using permanent marker to imprint the school's name, logo, or seal on all computers, televisions, VCRs, DVD players, cameras, etc., can deter intruders who intend to sell the equipment.[†]
 11. **Adjusting indoor or outdoor lighting.** There is no consensus on whether well-lit school campuses and building interiors or "dark" campuses are superior in terms of crime prevention. Obviously, lighting adjustments alone are not effective deterrents, but in
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† The International Dark-Sky Association (1997) offers suggestions for defining “lights out” policies and guidelines for implementing the practice. The San Diego school system saw a 33 percent reduction in property crime over a two-year period and saved more than \$1 million in electricity costs after establishing such a policy (Patterson 1996).

†† See Goldstein (1996) and Schneider, Walker, and Sprague (2000) for more detailed information on using target-hardening devices at schools.

††† Zeisel (1976) recommends involving students in the care of school buildings and grounds, and engaging them in ongoing, active projects. Further, motivating marginalized students, in addition to school leaders, can help to deter all students from future vandalism.

combination with other responses, both approaches have shown positive results. Well-lit campuses and buildings make suspicious activity more visible to observers, and also may offer some protection to custodial staff and others who may legitimately be on campus after dark.⁴³ On the other hand, a “lights out” policy makes it more difficult for potential intruders to manipulate locks and hinges at entry points, and if intruders do enter the building, observers can easily spot any lights that should not be on. Not only have some schools benefited from decreased vandalism-related costs, but they have also realized significant energy savings.^{44,†}

12. Obstructing vandals through physical barriers.

Target-hardening measures such as using stronger finishes and materials, or placing objects out of reach or in an enclosure, make it harder to damage property.⁴⁵ These can also include toughened glass or glass substitutes, fire-retardant paint, graffiti-repellent paint or coatings, concrete or steel outdoor furniture, tamperproof hardware out of reach from the ground, and door hinges with non-removable pins.^{††} Computer labs and classes that use expensive equipment may be located on the second floor to impede access and removal.⁴⁶

13. Repairing damage quickly and improving the appearance of school grounds.

Clean, well-maintained buildings free of debris or garbage and with attractively landscaped grounds are less at risk for vandalism and break-ins.⁴⁷ Consistent maintenance may serve as an “occupation proxy,” giving the appearance that the school is under steady surveillance by those concerned about keeping it safe.⁴⁸ Thus, it follows that any damage incurred, either through vandalism or normal wear and tear, should be repaired quickly.^{†††}



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Prompt removal of graffiti denies graffiti artists the satisfaction of seeing their handiwork and, in the case of gang-related graffiti, the likelihood of retaliatory tagging.

- 14. Removing ground-floor glass windows and other vandalism targets.** Vandalism to building exteriors can be thwarted by removing hardware fixtures and altering surfaces that are easily vandalized. Smooth, uniform surfaces are attractive graffiti targets, but can be protected by applying textured or patterned surfaces.⁴⁹

Offender-Focused Responses

- 15. Increasing the frequency of security-staff patrols.** Increasing the frequency with which security staff patrol school grounds and buildings increases the likelihood that a potential intruder will be seen. While it can be useful for police to make sporadic checks of school grounds while on their normal patrol, continually patrolling school property is an inefficient use of police resources. Instead, police should conduct risk assessments and respond to and investigate vandalism incidents.⁵⁰



† If this response is selected, many strategic decisions must be made regarding the system and component specifications, camera placement, wiring, etc. For a thorough discussion of these issues, see Green (1999) and Garst (2004).

†† Poyner (1984) notes that schools are sometimes located in quiet areas some distance from busy commercial areas or traffic, for safety and amenity reasons. This isolation can diminish the advantage of having clear sight lines to key vulnerability points.

††† The Turner-Fenton Secondary School in Ontario used the principles of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) to reduce the number of trespassers loitering on and vandalizing school property. Reorienting the school's parking lot increased opportunities for natural surveillance and improved entry-point control. Separating the gymnasium from classroom areas with partitions and safety glass improved opportunities for natural surveillance in vulnerable corridors (Peel Regional Police 1996).

16. Using closed-circuit television. The strategic placement of closed-circuit television (CCTV) may deter potential offenders. When vandalism and break-ins occur, CCTV footage can be used to identify the perpetrators.[†] Though the initial financial outlay may be significant, over the long term, CCTV may be less expensive than funding a full-time security patrol.

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Conspicuously placed surveillance cameras can be a useful deterrent by increasing the risk of identification and prosecution.

17. Improving opportunities for natural surveillance. The likelihood that school staff, residents, and pedestrians going about their daily activities will spot an intruder depends on the visibility of the school grounds from nearby houses, sidewalks, and streets.^{††} Clear sight lines in key locations, such as entrances, parking lots, hallways, and playgrounds, maximize the ability of residents and passersby to observe activity in vulnerable areas.^{†††} Opportunities for natural surveillance are enhanced when staff offices are located throughout the school building, and staff should be vigilant as they move around the school.⁵¹



18. Providing caretaker or "school sitter" housing on school grounds. The continuous presence of a caretaker or "school sitter" on school grounds can deter potential intruders. An apartment in the school itself or a mobile home on the school grounds can provide rent-free housing to a responsible adult in exchange for a designated number of hours patrolling the property.[†] An alternative to having an on-site residence is to stagger custodial shifts for 24-hour coverage. In either arrangement, it is important that the caretaker or custodian is instructed not to intervene in suspicious activity, but rather to alert security staff or the police.⁵²

† It is important that mobile units be positioned to afford a clear view of as much of the school as possible, including the most likely approach and escape routes (Poyner 1984).

19. Holding offenders accountable. Very few perpetrators of school vandalism are identified and apprehended, and even fewer are prosecuted. Courts are generally lenient with offenders, and in most cases, the damage from an individual incident is minor and does not warrant harsh penalties. However, creative and well-publicized interventions to hold offenders accountable can have both a specific and a general deterrence effect.

The most traditional approach to offender accountability involves either individual or group counseling to address the underlying motivations for the behavior. There has been some success with juvenile arsonists using this approach, and counseling that entails behavior modification (token economy, contingency contracts, incentives, and rewards) has had some success.⁵³

Restitution programs include a set of administrative and legal procedures to get money from offenders to pay for repair or replacement of damaged property. Publicizing the results of these efforts is important to maintain their deterrent effect.⁵⁴ Obviously, these programs are effective only to the extent that offenders are identified and apprehended.



† Strang (2002) describes how restorative justice programs have been implemented in Australia to deal with school vandalism. Nicholl (2000) explains the seven basic elements of restorative justice.

†† A handbook containing practical guidance on property risk management was created and distributed to all head teachers in Scotland as part of a vandalism reduction strategy (Accounts Commission for Scotland 2001).

One of the more promising approaches to encouraging offender accountability is to bring together all of the stakeholders in the issue to develop a resolution collectively. The goal is for the offender to make up for the offense, either by paying restitution or by repairing the damaged property.†

20. Diverting offenders to alternative activities. Believing that involvement in school vandalism and break-ins arises from an excess of unstructured time, many jurisdictions develop alternative activities for students during after-school and evening hours. In addition to structured events, graffiti boards and mural programs may attract offenders to pro-social activities.⁵⁵ Programs that foster a sense of ownership and school pride may make some students more apt to report vandalism and encourage others to respect school property, but they are unlikely to affect students whose involvement in vandalism is a result of alienation from the larger school social environment.

School Management Practices

21. Educating school staff. Not only should school staff be familiar with fire safety procedures, but they should also be aware of the various strategies enacted to protect school property. The strategies should be discussed regularly at staff meetings, and police and fire departments should be included in pre-school year and pre-summer in-service training. Creating a manual containing important safety information, procedures for handling emergencies, and telephone numbers of those to be contacted when suspicious activity is observed ensures that teachers will have ready access to those details.††



22. Controlling building and room keys. Intruders sometimes enter school buildings by using duplicate keys. The distribution of keys to building entrances and equipment storage rooms should be limited, and periodic key checks can be used to ensure that the owners of keys have control of them.⁵⁶ Stamping DO NOT DUPLICATE on keys and warning key holders of the dangers of students obtaining keys can prevent unauthorized access. Some jurisdictions use computer access cards, rather than keys, for rooms where valuables are stored. These cards permit access only at certain times of the day, and records can show which card was used to access any particular room.⁵⁷

23. Maintaining an inventory of valuable equipment. Missing equipment sometimes goes unreported because school officials do not know what they have, and therefore do not know when it has been stolen.⁵⁸ Diligent inventory checks can not only help in maintaining control of school assets, but can also help in preparing loss estimates if property is stolen. Sound inventory procedures include:

- taking stock of all valuables;
- keeping both paper and computerized inventory lists;
- supplementing inventory lists with serial numbers, physical descriptions, and video images;
- securing inventory lists and videotapes off-site; and
- updating inventory lists each year.⁵⁹

24. Creating a "vandalism account." To provide incentives to students for acceptable conduct, school districts can allocate a specific amount of money from the maintenance account to cover the costs of all vandalism-related repairs. Any funds that remain at the end of the semester are allocated to students to pay for something of their choice (e.g., a pizza party, new equipment, a dance or other social



† Typically, the school administers the account. One possible variation is for students to administer the account and to take responsibility for paying all of the bills for property replacement and repair. This helps students to better appreciate the real costs associated with even minor acts of vandalism (Casserly, Bass, and Garrett 1980).

†† Mayer et al. (1987) created a school discipline survey to assess the quality of disciplinary procedures (pp. 204-206).

††† Aryani, Alsabrook, and Garrett (2001) provide specific information for setting up a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program, including administrative tips and responsibilities for police agencies, school administrators, and students.

event).[†] Programs involving rewards are most effective with younger students, but older students often respond to the opportunity for shared administrative authority and responsibility.⁶⁰ Some jurisdictions do not deduct repair costs if the perpetrator is identified and restitution is made, which gives students an incentive to provide information.⁶¹

- 25. Changing the organizational climate.** Social measures are not generally effective forms of crime prevention. However, because schools have closely structured social systems and clear authority systems, responses that affect the social environment can be effective.⁶² In particular, schools can seek to make the environment more positively reinforcing, reduce the misuse of disciplinary procedures, and work to improve administrator-teacher, teacher-student, and custodian-student relations.^{††}

Community-Focused Responses

- 26. Providing rewards for information concerning vandalism or break-ins.** Offender-focused responses require that vandals and intruders be identified and apprehended. Police investigations of vandalism incidents can be enhanced by high-quality information provided by students and community residents. As seen with traditional "Crime Stoppers" programs, setting up telephone or internet-based tip-lines, offering rewards for information, and guaranteeing anonymity encourage students and residents to come forward with specific information.^{†††} The most effective programs actively involve students in collecting and synthesizing information for police, and in determining payout amounts in the event of apprehension.⁶³



27. Creating "School Watch" programs. Similar to "Neighborhood Watch" efforts, community residents can conduct citizen patrols of school property during evenings and weekends. Membership and regular participation in voluntary patrols increase when some form of prestige is offered to volunteers.[†] Effective practices include:

- patrolling regularly, but at unpredictable times;
- equipping volunteers with cell phones for prompt communication with police or other emergency services;
- engaging in passive surveillance only, and not interacting with potential vandals or intruders in any way; and
- publicizing activities and outcomes among students and residents through school-based and local media outlets.⁶⁴

† Schools in Hartlepool, England, took the unusual step of targeting young school children (ages four to 11) in their efforts. After the initiative was launched in 33 primary schools, all students received pens and pencils with the "School Watch" logo, and were reminded of the initiative throughout the year through creative classroom activities. Involving students makes them feel important and also teaches good citizenship. As a result, the number of incidents and the associated costs decreased (Cleveland Police Department 1999).

In response to a specific problem or rash of incidents, School Watch has produced short-term reductions in vandalism.⁶⁵ However, community watch programs are difficult to sustain, have not been shown to reduce crime over the long-term, and may actually increase the fear of crime.⁶⁶

28. Evaluating public use of school facilities after hours.

There is no consensus on how effective after-hours use of school facilities is in deterring vandalism and break-ins. On the one hand, making facilities and amenities available to residents increases the opportunities for natural surveillance to protect school buildings and property. Such access is also in keeping with the spirit of schools as hubs of community activity. However, residents who use the facilities after hours may not always have innocent intentions. If this response is adopted, rules and boundaries should be made very clear to participants, and



only those areas required for the activities should be accessible, with other areas of the school secured by movable gates and locking partitions.

Responses With Limited Effectiveness

29. Controlling the sale of vandalism tools. Some jurisdictions have attempted to control the various implements used for vandalism—for graffiti, in particular. Age-specific bans on the sale of spray paint or wide-tipped markers are designed to limit youth access to them. These bans are particularly difficult to implement and enforce because they require extensive cooperation from merchants.⁶⁷

30. Increasing penalties. Responding to school vandalism and break-ins with excessively punitive criminal justice sanctions or harsh administrative punishments (for example, expulsion) has been found to increase the incidence of vandalism.⁶⁸ Further, legal deterrents are generally ineffective when victim reporting and offender apprehension are not consistent, as is the case with school vandalism.⁶⁹ Finally, most acts of vandalism are relatively minor, and thus are not serious enough to warrant severe consequences.⁷⁰



Appendix: Summary of Responses to School Vandalism and Break-Ins

The table below summarizes the responses to school vandalism and break-ins, the mechanism by which they are intended to work, the conditions under which they ought to work best, and some factors you should consider before implementing a particular response. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem.

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If...	Considerations
General Considerations for an Effective Response Strategy					
1.	19	Recognizing the person-environment interaction	Addresses personal motivations for and environmental facilitators of vandalism	...multifaceted, potent combinations of responses are implemented	Over-reliance on environmental responses can make schools seem fortress-like
2.	20	Establishing a task force	Involves stakeholders with varying expertise	...broad representation is sought, stakeholders are responsible for responses within their area of expertise, and student leaders and marginalized students are included	Due to its complexity, the initiative requires a coordinator to ensure that all responses are implemented according to design and within targeted timelines



Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If...	Considerations
3.	21	Using the media wisely	Shows vandalism's impact, such as the scale of resources squandered and feelings of loss among students	...both local media and student media sources are used	There is a risk that media attention may sensationalize events and promote the concept of achieving notoriety through high-profile crimes committed against school property
4.	21	Setting priorities	Targets events with both high financial and social costs	...high-value items are protected, and priorities are established at the outset of the initiative	It may not address factors that contribute to high-volume but non-serious vandalism
5.	22	Operating at the district level	Maximizes the efficiency of problem analysis and response implementation	...individual schools are given the authority to fine-tune responses to address local conditions	Requires both district- and school-level facilitators to make sure that action plans are carried out at each site

Specific Responses to School Vandalism and Break-Ins

Changes to the Physical Environment

6.	22	Controlling access to deter unauthorized entry	Makes it difficult to enter school grounds and buildings after hours	...materials and devices are of good quality and cannot easily be broken or disabled	It can be more costly to fortify the building than to repair the damage caused by vandalism; fire escape routes may be compromised; it can give buildings a foreboding appearance
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Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If...	Considerations
7.	23	Posting warning signs	Lists prohibited activities, indicates that the school is cared for and controlled, and deters potential intruders	...signs are prominently placed and are supplemented with architectural features such as gardens, sitting areas, and student artwork	It may not deter highly motivated offenders; signs and architectural features may become vandalism targets
8.	24	Storing valuables in secure areas	Makes it harder and more time-consuming to steal valuables	...valuables are stored in inner rooms with high-quality locking devices, and there are no signs indicating where high-value goods are	It may be inconvenient to staff who regularly want to access equipment
9.	25	Reducing the availability of combustibles	Makes it harder to start a fire, by limiting the materials available on-site	...trash cans are emptied regularly, and flammable chemicals are always properly secured	It requires constant attention; it may be inconvenient to staff who regularly want to access chemicals
10.	25	Inscribing valuables with identifying marks	Reduces the incentive for burglary by making it hard to sell stolen goods	...identifying marks are conspicuous and permanent	It can make equipment less attractive; it is ineffective if the vandal wants to destroy the items



Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If...	Considerations
11.	25	Adjusting indoor or outdoor lighting	Either increases others' ability to spot intruders or reduces intruders' ability to see what they are doing	...the community is aware of the school's policy and knows how to report suspicious behavior to the police	Well-lit campuses have high energy costs; "dark campuses" may compromise the safety of staff and others who are there for legitimate reasons
12.	26	Obstructing vandals through physical barriers	Makes it harder to damage property	...high-quality, strong finishes and enclosures are used, and barriers are well maintained	It does not address vandals' underlying motivation; it can be expensive; potential offenders may see it as a challenge
13.	26	Repairing damage quickly and improving the appearance of school grounds	Gives the impression that the school is under steady surveillance by those concerned about keeping it safe	...materials needed to repair damage or repaint surfaces are kept on hand	It requires constant attention by maintenance staff; multiple repairs can be costly
14.	27	Removing ground-floor glass windows and other vandalism targets	Eliminates or fortifies easily damaged fixtures	...features are considered when buildings are first designed, and high-quality glass substitutes are used	It can be costly and decrease the building's attractiveness



Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If...	Considerations
<i>Offender-Focused Responses</i>					
15.	27	Increasing the frequency of security-staff patrols	Increases offenders' risk of getting caught, and regular contact with police may improve reporting	...patrols are consistent but unpredictable, and mainly conducted by school security staff, conserving police resources for response and investigation	It requires significant manpower, which may be costly
16.	28	Using closed-circuit television	Increases offenders' risk of getting caught, as footage may be used to identify them	...equipment is placed and angled properly, and used to review incidents rather than to prompt intervention in ongoing incidents	It is expensive and logistically difficult to install in existing buildings; cameras can be vandalized; it requires monitoring and consistent maintenance
17.	28	Improving opportunities for natural surveillance	Increases offenders' risk of getting caught	...residents are encouraged to be alert to suspicious activity, and know how to report it to police	It is not useful if the school is in an isolated area
18.	29	Providing caretaker or "school sitter" housing on school grounds	Increases offenders' risk of getting caught	...the caretaker feels it is cost-beneficial and is a school employee	Maintaining the residence may be costly; it may be hard to supervise the caretaker appropriately



Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If...	Considerations
19.	29	Holding offenders accountable	Deters would-be offenders from engaging in or repeating the behavior	...it is combined with investigative enforcement activities, involves students in problem-solving, addresses offenders' motivations, and is publicized during student orientation	Its effectiveness is not well documented; few offenders are apprehended
20.	30	Diverting offenders to alternative activities	Decreases the amount of unstructured, unsupervised time offenders have; channels behavior in pro-social directions; and may encourage better reporting	...programs encourage a sense of ownership, target students appropriately, and involve students in planning activities	It may not involve the students most at risk for vandalism; it may not have credibility among disenfranchised student groups
<i>School Management Practices</i>					
21.	30	Educating school staff	Increases the consistency with which other responses are applied, and increases offenders' risk of getting caught	...property protection procedures are discussed regularly at staff meetings, and procedures are documented in a manual	It does not address offenders' motivation or the environmental features that make the school vulnerable
22.	31	Controlling building and room keys	Reduces potential means of unauthorized access	...the distribution of keys is limited, and periodic key checks are conducted	It is limited to a single entry method; it depends on teacher vigilance and compliance with procedures



Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If...	Considerations
23.	31	Maintaining an inventory of valuable equipment	Improves the ability to detect when equipment has been stolen	...detailed inventory lists are created and secured off-site, and are updated regularly	It affects only the ability to confirm that property has been stolen; it has no prevention value
24.	31	Creating a "vandalism account"	Gives students an incentive to refrain from and report vandalism	...rewards are made available periodically throughout the year	It requires staff time to administer; apathetic youths can subvert the process; vandalism is not always committed by students; if no money is returned, the program loses credibility
25.	32	Changing the organizational climate	Makes the school more responsive to student needs, and addresses vindictive motivations	...students are involved in identifying concerns and designing modifications	It may be difficult to develop a plan; it requires motivated staff to implement changes; vandalism is not always committed by students
<i>Community-Focused Responses</i>					
26.	32	Providing rewards for information concerning vandalism or break-ins	Increases incentives for students and residents to provide information, and increases offenders' risk of getting caught	...it is supported by local police, and students are given autonomy in running the program	Investigation time may be wasted on inaccurate or misleading tips; it is not prevention-oriented



Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If...	Considerations
27.	33	Creating "School Watch" programs	Increases offenders' risk of getting caught	...patrols are regular but unpredictable, volunteers immediately contact the police if they see suspicious activities, and activities and outcomes are well publicized	It can be hard to maintain resident participation levels; there is a risk of vigilantism among volunteers, and concerns about volunteer safety
28.	33	Evaluating public use of school facilities after hours	Increases offenders' risk of getting caught	...rules and boundaries are clear, and other areas of the school are secured	Potential vandals or intruders may have unquestioned access to the school
<i>Responses With Limited Effectiveness</i>					
29.	34	Controlling the sale of vandalism tools	Bans the sale of materials used for vandalism		It requires extensive cooperation from merchants; it does not address other means of acquiring tools
30.	34	Increasing penalties	Imposes harsh punishments on offenders		Punitive environments increase the incidence of vandalism; reporting is inconsistent, and apprehension rates are low; most acts of vandalism are minor and do not warrant severe penalties



Endnotes

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 - ² Sadler (1988).
 - ³ Arson Prevention Bureau (2003b).
 - ⁴ Heaviside et al. (1998).
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 - ⁶ Casserly, Bass, and Garrett (1980).
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⁵⁰ Casserly, Bass, and Garrett (1980).
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⁵² Zeisel (1976).
⁵³ Cooze (1995).
⁵⁴ Zeisel (1976).
⁵⁵ Goldstein (1997).
⁵⁶ Blauvelt (1981).
⁵⁷ Patterson (1996).
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⁶¹ Zeisel (1976).

⁶² Poyner (1984).

⁶³ Aryani, Alsabrook, and Garrett (2001).

⁶⁴ Allsop (1988).

⁶⁵ Allsop (1988); Cleveland Police Department (1999).

⁶⁶ Sherman et al. (1998); National Research Council (2004).

⁶⁷ Weisel (2002).

⁶⁸ Casserly, Bass, and Garrett (1980); Goldstein (1997).

⁶⁹ Houghton (1982).

⁷⁰ Clarke (1978).



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About the Author

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Kelly Dedel Johnson is the director of One in 37 Research Inc., a criminal justice consulting firm based in Portland, Oregon. As a consultant to federal, state, and local agencies, she contributes to research on the juvenile and criminal justice systems by 1) developing written tools to enhance practice or inform public policy; 2) conducting investigations of confinement conditions in juvenile correctional facilities; and 3) undertaking rigorous evaluations of various juvenile and criminal justice programs to assess their effectiveness. She has provided evaluation-related technical assistance to over 60 jurisdictions nationwide for the Bureau of Justice Assistance. In this capacity, she has worked with a broad range of criminal justice programs implemented by police, prosecutors, public defenders, local jails, community corrections, and prisons. She consults with the Justice Department as a monitor/investigator of civil rights violations in juvenile correctional facilities, most often in the area of education. Among her other research interests are prisoner reentry, risk assessment and offender classification, and juveniles in adult correctional facilities. Before working as a consultant, she was a founder and senior research scientist at The Institute on Crime, Justice, and Corrections at The George Washington University, and a senior research associate at the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. Dedel Johnson received bachelor's degrees in psychology and criminal justice from the University of Richmond, and a doctorate in clinical psychology from the Center for Psychological Studies, in Berkeley, California.



Recommended Readings

- ***A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens and Their Environments***, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1993. This guide offers a practical introduction for police practitioners to two types of surveys that police find useful: surveying public opinion and surveying the physical environment. It provides guidance on whether and how to conduct cost-effective surveys.
 - ***Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers***, by John E. Eck (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001). This guide is a companion to the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* series. It provides basic guidance to measuring and assessing problem-oriented policing efforts.
 - ***Conducting Community Surveys***, by Deborah Weisel (Bureau of Justice Statistics and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1999). This guide, along with accompanying computer software, provides practical, basic pointers for police in conducting community surveys. The document is also available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.
 - ***Crime Prevention Studies***, edited by Ronald V. Clarke (Criminal Justice Press, 1993, et seq.). This is a series of volumes of applied and theoretical research on reducing opportunities for crime. Many chapters are evaluations of initiatives to reduce specific crime and disorder problems.
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- ***Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing: The 1999 Herman Goldstein Award Winners.*** This document produced by the National Institute of Justice in collaboration with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Police Executive Research Forum provides detailed reports of the best submissions to the annual award program that recognizes exemplary problem-oriented responses to various community problems. A similar publication is available for the award winners from subsequent years. The documents are also available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.
 - ***Not Rocket Science? Problem-Solving and Crime Reduction,*** by Tim Read and Nick Tilley (Home Office Crime Reduction Research Series, 2000). Identifies and describes the factors that make problem-solving effective or ineffective as it is being practiced in police forces in England and Wales.
 - ***Opportunity Makes the Thief: Practical Theory for Crime Prevention,*** by Marcus Felson and Ronald V. Clarke (Home Office Police Research Series, Paper No. 98, 1998). Explains how crime theories such as routine activity theory, rational choice theory and crime pattern theory have practical implications for the police in their efforts to prevent crime.
 - ***Problem Analysis in Policing,*** by Rachel Boba (Police Foundation, 2003). Introduces and defines problem analysis and provides guidance on how problem analysis can be integrated and institutionalized into modern policing practices.
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- ***Problem-Oriented Policing***, by Herman Goldstein (McGraw-Hill, 1990, and Temple University Press, 1990). Explains the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing, provides examples of it in practice, and discusses how a police agency can implement the concept.
 - ***Problem-Oriented Policing and Crime Prevention***, by Anthony A. Braga (Criminal Justice Press, 2003). Provides a thorough review of significant policing research about problem places, high-activity offenders, and repeat victims, with a focus on the applicability of those findings to problem-oriented policing. Explains how police departments can facilitate problem-oriented policing by improving crime analysis, measuring performance, and securing productive partnerships.
 - ***Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years***, by Michael S. Scott (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2000). Describes how the most critical elements of Herman Goldstein's problem-oriented policing model have developed in practice over its 20-year history, and proposes future directions for problem-oriented policing. The report is also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov.
 - ***Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News***, by John E. Eck and William Spelman (Police Executive Research Forum, 1987). Explains the rationale behind problem-oriented policing and the problem-solving process, and provides examples of effective problem-solving in one agency.
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- ***Problem-Solving Tips: A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder Through Problem-Solving Partnerships*** by Karin Schmerler, Matt Perkins, Scott Phillips, Tammy Rinehart and Meg Townsend. (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1998) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Provides a brief introduction to problem-solving, basic information on the SARA model and detailed suggestions about the problem-solving process.
 - ***Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies***, Second Edition, edited by Ronald V. Clarke (Harrow and Heston, 1997). Explains the principles and methods of situational crime prevention, and presents over 20 case studies of effective crime prevention initiatives.
 - ***Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving***, by Rana Sampson and Michael S. Scott (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2000) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Presents case studies of effective police problem-solving on 18 types of crime and disorder problems.
 - ***Using Analysis for Problem-Solving: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement***, by Timothy S. Bynum (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001). Provides an introduction for police to analyzing problems within the context of problem-oriented policing.
 - ***Using Research: A Primer for Law Enforcement Managers***, Second Edition, by John E. Eck and Nancy G. LaVigne (Police Executive Research Forum, 1994). Explains many of the basics of research as it applies to police management and problem-solving.
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