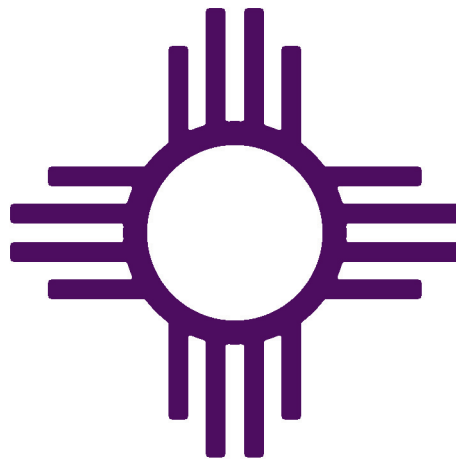


Safe Schools

Report

2004-2005



Produced by
The New Mexico Public Education Department
in partnership with
The University of New Mexico
Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
August 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr. Veronica García
Secretary of Education

Safety in New Mexico's schools is one of the most important issues facing our communities. Every school and school district in the state make it a priority to identify and implement ways to increase the safety, security and integrity of students, teachers, staff, parents and visitors at our schools on a daily basis. Safety is critical for fostering an environment that is conducive to learning and growing, and for building healthier relationships.

This report provides details about safety data that were collected from New Mexico school districts for the 2004-2005 school year. It examines key areas of concern across the state, and demonstrates trends in incidents of violence and vandalism. This report reflects New Mexico's emphasis on safety issues, safe school plans and school safety initiatives.

Among the highlights of this report is the number of areas in which safety has shown steady improvement. The total number of incidents of violence and vandalism was at its lowest point in more than six years. Improvements have been seen in most areas of vandalism, violent crimes and weapons incidents from previous years. One result of the decrease in vandalism was that the financial losses resulting from vandalism were far lower than they have been in previous years.

The number of incidents involving weapons remained quite low, as was the number of incidents requiring law enforcement (41% fewer incidents required law enforcement than the previous school year).

Safety continues to be a priority issue for all of us, and it will continue to be a work in progress. We can see through the data in this report, as well as through recent legislation and the creation of the School Safety Task Force, that New Mexico is responding to all safety concerns in a compassionate and effective manner, while developing proactive measures to protect everyone in our schools.

INTRODUCTION

Each year since 1989, New Mexico's 89 local school boards have reported incidents of violence and vandalism to the Public Education Department (PED), for the period of August 1 through July 31. This report provides a statewide school safety profile for New Mexico schools for the 2004-05 school year, and is intended to reflect the preeminence of concerted and coordinated efforts of the past few years to ensure safe schools. It contains the data reported by the school districts as well as insights and perspectives from school safety experts around the nation about how to achieve and maintain safe schools.

The purpose of this report is to provide pertinent data for use by policy and decision makers at all levels of the educational process. It contains existing information about incidents and trends of violence and vandalism, and resources to offer easy access to those involved in prevention and intervention measures. As such, the purpose of statutory measures that initially required the production of this report was merely to gather important information. Since 1997, the PED has been implementing a proactive plan for preventing and responding to the occurrence of such incidents. These efforts began with a statewide safe schools forum that resulted in recommendations for school safety. As a result of the recommendations from the forum, every school district in New Mexico has developed and is implementing comprehensive Safe School Plans. These plans address the areas of prevention, policies and procedures and emergency response.

HISTORY OF THE REPORT

New Mexico Statutory Law

The filing of this report was mandated by the State of New Mexico in 1978, through Statutory Law (Article 1, Chapter 22, Sections 1-7, amended 1989). The statutory provisions require school districts to submit an annual report of incidents of vandalism and violence that occur in the schools to the PED, using the reporting procedures established by the department.

State Board of Education Task Force

In 1996 the State Board of Education (SBE) and the State Superintendent appointed a task force to review the New Mexico Student Rights and Responsibilities regulation, SBE Reg. No. 81-3. The objective of the task force was to determine how well the regulation supports the efforts of local school districts to ensure student safety and to provide an environment that is conducive to learning. The task force concluded that SBE Reg. No. 81-3 (now entitled SBE Reg. 6.11.2 NM AC) was still functional, but recommended several changes. As a result of those recommendations, the SBE made the following changes to the regulation in 1997:

1. Provisions were made for appropriate state, local agency, and/or community input into the formulation and enforcement of school rules, including those related to corporal punishment.
2. Prohibitions against gang-related activity, sexual harassment, and the possession of weapons in school.

3. The SBE¹ updated and/or provided general provisions dealing with protected free speech and expression, search and seizure, attendance requirements, and discipline of students for out of school conduct that affects the school.
4. The SBE¹ made clarifications/amendments of certain provisions dealing with procedures for detention, suspension and expulsion of students.

Planning for Safe Schools in New Mexico

In February 1997, a two-day planning forum was held in Albuquerque with more than 150 participants statewide, including youth, to prepare a set of strategic goals and plans for safe schools. Organized into 15 planning groups, each of which addressed a specific issue, they completed a strategic planning process, as each group assessed the status of the question before it and proposed goals, action steps and measures of success. Public Education Department staff then translated the results of group discussions at the forum into goals, objectives, activities and measures of success, as well as resources.

To make sure that the plan was comprehensive—incorporating all issues that impact the school environment—they included features of other plans and identified various resources from other state offices that can assist in ensuring a safe school environment. The goals resulting from the safe schools planning forum are:

- Goal 1: All students in New Mexico will have access to public educational services in a safe, healthful, caring, and respectful learning environment.
- Goal 2: All school personnel in New Mexico will be able to carry out their duties in a safe, healthful, caring, and respectful work environment.
- Goal 3: Students, school staff, parents, and communities will understand that safe schools are everyone's responsibility.

A Comprehensive Approach that is Unique

All fifty states are required to have emergency preparedness plans that include procedures for schools in the event of a national or local disaster or foreign aggression. New Mexico was the first state in the nation to require all schools to develop and implement *comprehensive safe schools plans* that include prevention, policies and procedures as well as emergency response. In addition, the Public Education Department is currently in the process of developing guidance for safe schools plans to include a section on how to respond after an incident has occurred (recovery). There are, therefore, three components that comprise the *Safe School Plan*.

1. The *Prevention* component is designed to provide instructions for school staff about how to prevent potentially harmful situations. This section includes information about health education, various prevention programs, counseling and mental health services, traffic safety, and elements of secure schools and environmental design inspections.

¹ Now called Public Education Commission (PEC)

2. The *Policies and Procedures* component provides directions for school staff about how to intervene in potentially harmful situations. It includes policy and procedure guidelines about what kinds of discipline to impose for various infractions; about the need for dress codes, maintaining attendance, reporting suspected cases of abuse and neglect; and about alternative education options.

3. The *Response* component prepares schools for potential emergency situations, with guidance for how to identify security needs, develop prevention and intervention techniques, evaluate physical facilities and communicate with staff and students in times of crisis and in preparing for possible incidents. It also includes, in addition to planning directives, instructions for training school personnel and students with practice drills. For this section, each school is expected to have at hand emergency phone numbers and instructions for emergency management team personnel, examples of various kinds of emergency situations and procedures for how to handle those situations, and the function of crisis counseling.

The New Mexico Safe Schools Plan was first implemented during the 1998-1999 academic year, with directives sent to each school district to prepare a comprehensive plan, and to submit this to the SBE (now PEC). The planning should take into account unique features of the school environment or location and to incorporate these in preparing for the full range of possible activities necessary to ensure a safe and respectful learning environment.

The School and Family Support Bureau of the PED prepared a template to assist school districts with meeting this requirement, which they could use to prepare their plans. As part of this process, district planning meetings included school personnel, parents and relevant community groups to obtain input for identifying unique conditions in order to develop detailed response plans for various situations in each school. To meet the accountability requirements for safe schools, districts identified goals and benchmarks to measure future progress and to document significant changes that they planned and/or that occurred. The plan also required a staff development section outlining training plans for school staff about how to respond if an incident or event occurred. As a working document, school districts will continually review and update or revise their Safe School Plans. Most school districts have a safety committee or task force in place that is responsible not only for developing and updating the original plans but also for conducting these reviews. Administrators are being asked to share their success stories about responding to special situations that occurred during the prior year. These can provide valuable insights for other district administrators and state officials.

With a comprehensive approach, vast improvements have been made in most schools in preparing for possible incidents. In addition to conducting fire drills – the only activity required by law – many districts now practice evacuations and shelter-in-place drills. In addition, schools are implementing a variety of prevention activities to defuse potential confrontations, such as mentoring programs, mediation programs, and anti-bullying programs and policies. Schools also reviewed the impact of seemingly extraneous issues such as dress codes, and conducted assessments to identify what is necessary for a comprehensive approach as, for instance, fences to keep coyotes out of a school yard, procedures if a hot air balloon lands on the school yard or a bear wanders onto the school grounds.

An exceptionally valuable outcome of this approach is the strengthening of partnerships among state and local agencies to support safe school efforts. Through these collaborative efforts, schools have sought and successfully obtained funds to enhance campus security and to purchase

other equipment to promote safe and drug-free schools. With assistance from local law enforcement personnel, some schools established a code system to alert others through the public address system about a potential danger or incident. Because of the enhanced partnership efforts in conjunction with preparing safe schools plans, and the comprehensive nature of the plans, schools are much more efficient and effective in responding to incidents than they were in the past.

Fulfilling the Provisions of the 2002 *No Child Left Behind* Act

This proactive approach of the PED, and of the school districts as they work with local constituencies and agencies, is consistent with the provisions of *No Child Left Behind*. Under this act, the “Unsafe School Choice Option” directs the states to define and identify schools that are “persistently dangerous,” and to offer alternative schools within the local education agency both to victims of violent offenses and to families if their children attend a school that meets the definition. A provision is also included that supports teachers and principals with maintaining order and discipline in the classroom without fear of litigation. States must certify to the Secretary of Education of the U.S. Department of Education that they are in compliance with this act as a condition of receiving funds under *No Child Left Behind*.

Joint Memorial Legislation

In 2003, the New Mexico state legislature passed three joint memorials addressing school safety. All three were written in response to the violent death of Carolyn Thurman Rustvold, a teacher at Montezuma Elementary School in Albuquerque early in the year. Senate Joint Memorial 66 requested the Legislative Education Study Committee to identify methods to enhance security at schools. House Joint Memorial 66 requested the State Board of Education and the Public Education Department to review school safety plans to assess the ability of those plans to ensure the safety of school employees and students at school. Senate Joint Memorial 59 requested the public school Capital Outlay Council to study the need for emergency notification systems in schools and to calculate the costs and feasibility of implementing such a system in every school within 3 years.

At the time of the publication of this report, the School Health Unit of the Public Education Department has begun to review these legislative initiatives, and has convened a School Safety Advisory Task Force to produce practical recommendations for enhancing school safety.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS IN ENSURING SAFETY IN NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS

In the 2004-2005 school year across the State of New Mexico, 89 school districts were responsible for educating 326,083 students, in 795 public and 192 nonpublic schools. The quality of the educational experience of these students, and of their more than 22,008 teachers and 11,860 other school personnel, is directly affected by the school environment, not merely whether it is a stimulating learning place, but whether they feel secure. New Mexico's schools have been steadily reducing the number of incidents of violence and vandalism that can disrupt students' learning over the last six years (see Figure 1). The total number of incidents of violence and vandalism in the 2004-05 school year was 35% lower than in the 1998-99 school year. These results may be partially attributed to the comprehensive approach that has been taken toward ensuring safe schools, with the development and implementation of safe school plans.

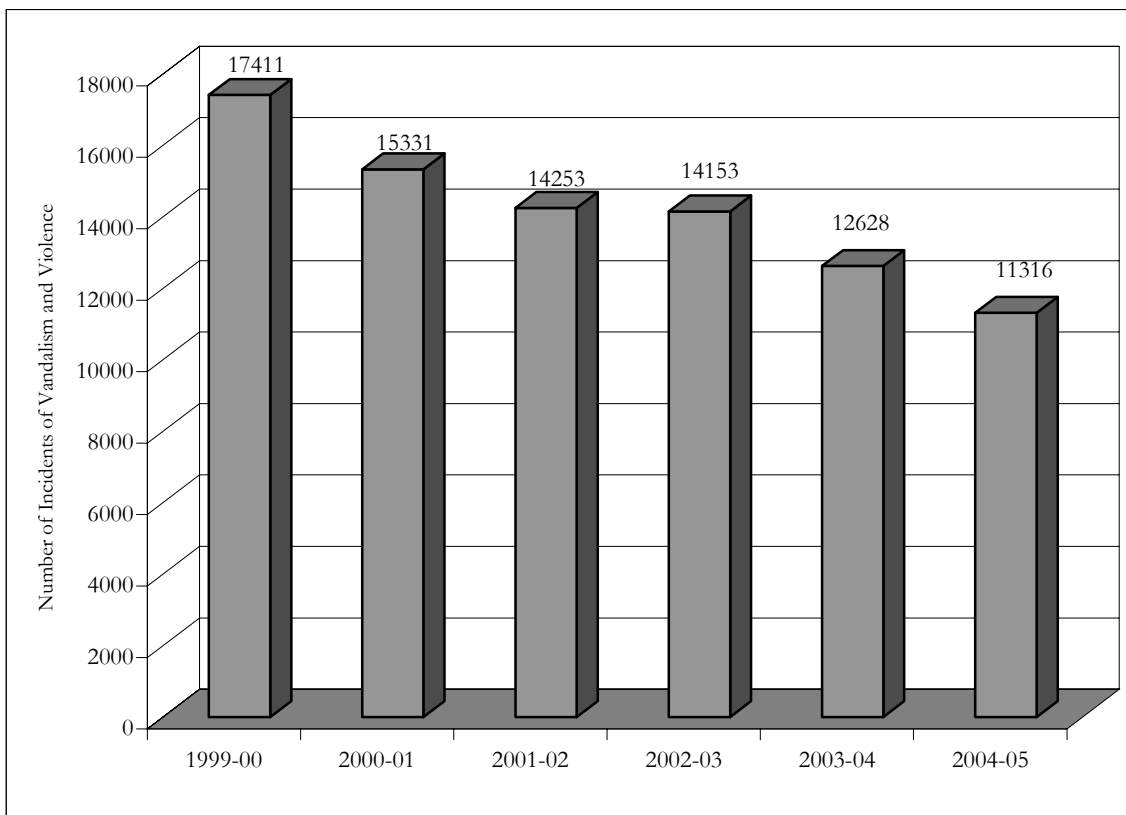


Figure 1. Total reported incidents of vandalism and violence by school year: 1999 to 2005.

VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN THE SCHOOLS

Firearm incidents were by far the least frequent of the incidents in New Mexico schools, accounting for only 0.3% of all incidents reported (see Figure 2). Incidents of physical violence (fights and assaults of various kinds) accounted for over three out of every four reported incidents, and were 14% higher than the previous year. Vandalism incidents were 34% lower and other criminal activities were 68% lower compared with the previous school year.

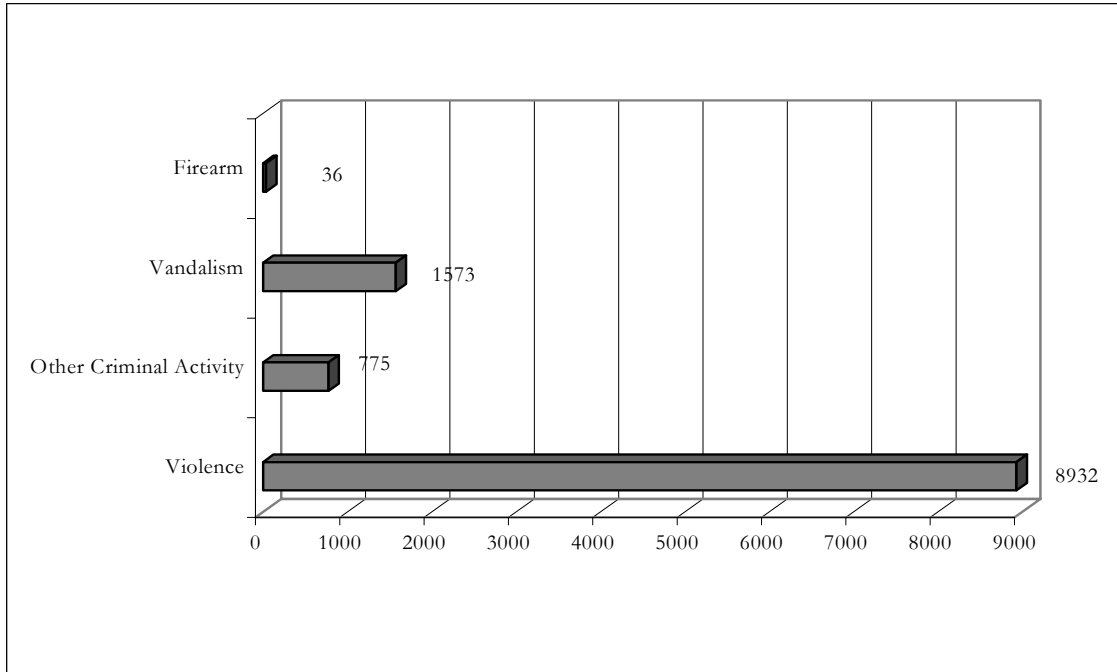


Figure 2. Number of incidents of violence and vandalism by type – 2004-05 school year.

Schools reported a total of 2,285 incidents of violence, vandalism or firearms to law enforcement agencies (see Figure 3), a 41% reduction from the previous year.

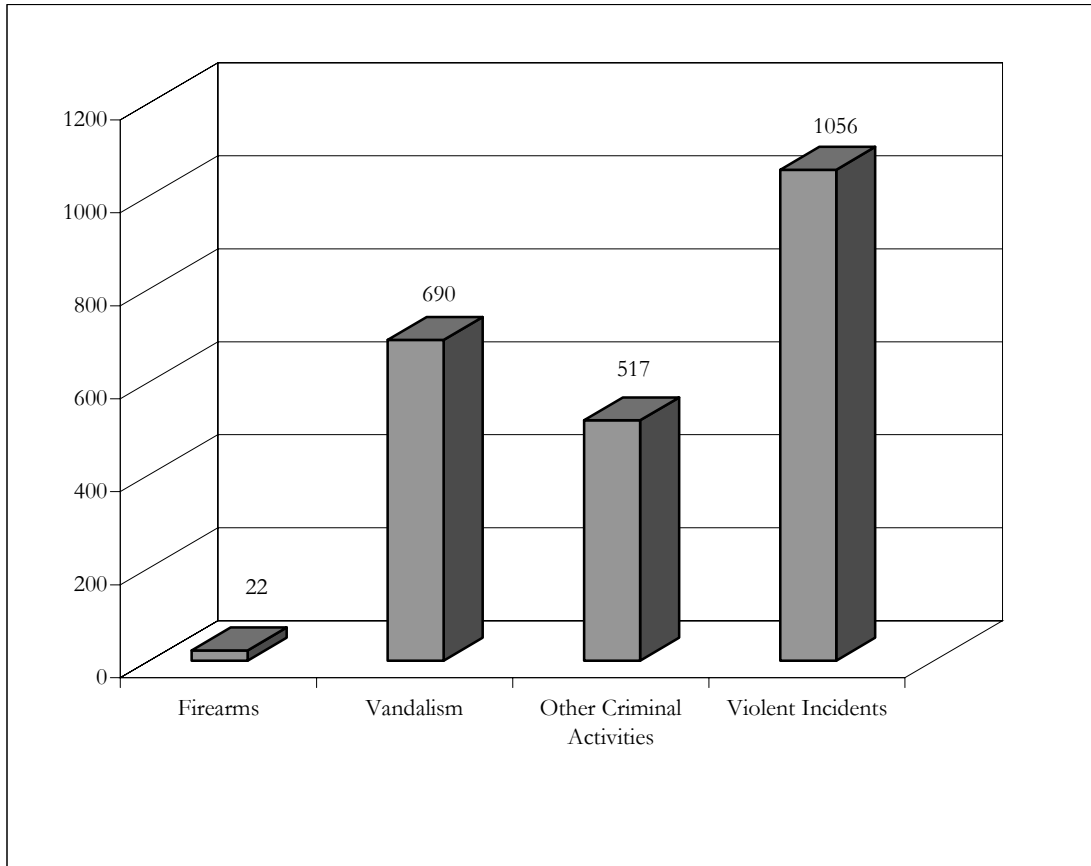


Figure 3. Reports to law enforcement – 2004-05 school year.

WEAPONS POSSESSION AND THE GUN-FREE SCHOOLS ACT

Firearm possession in the schools, although serious, remained rare. Thirty-six incidents of firearm possession were reported in the school year, or 6% of all reported weapons incidents (see Figure 4).

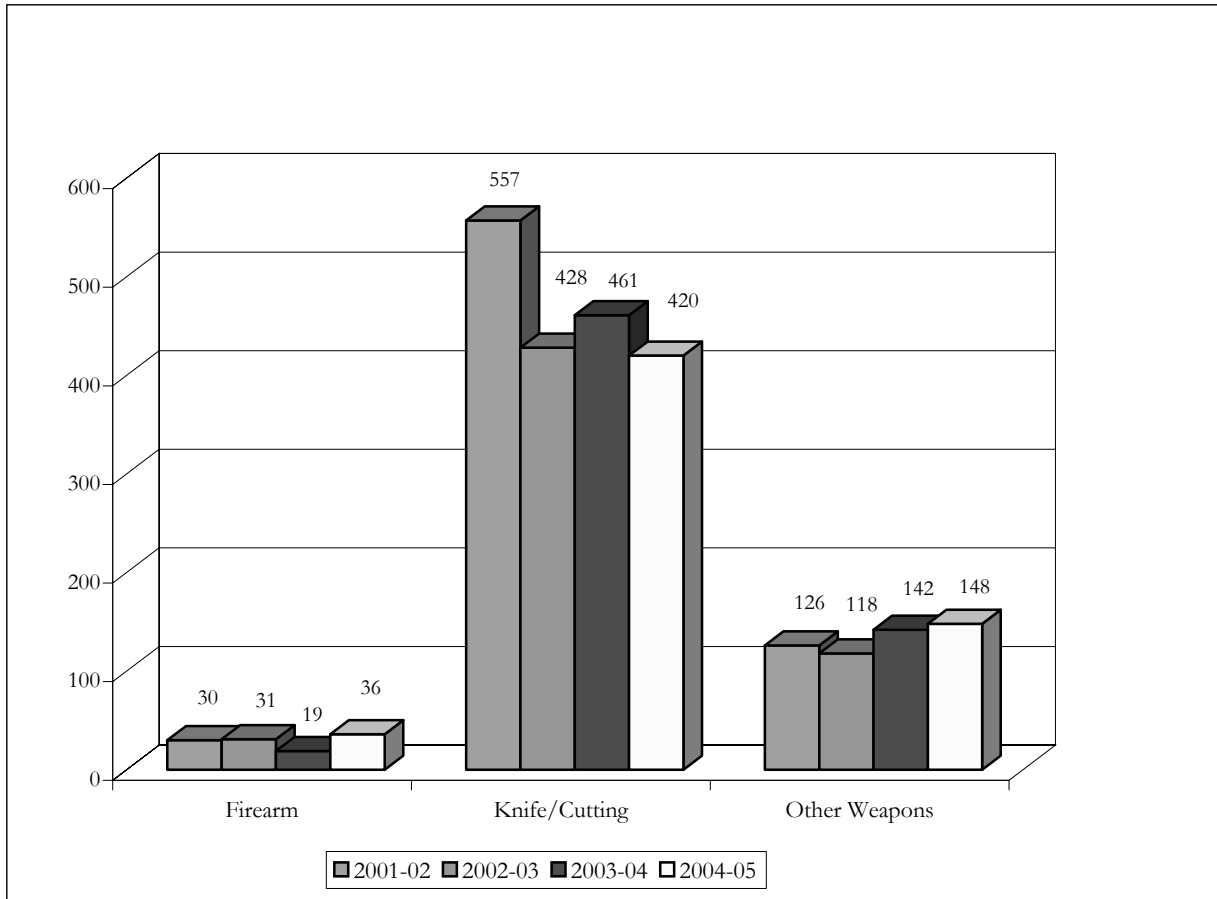


Figure 4. Possession of firearms and other weapons – 2004-05 school year.

Students were the offenders for nearly all reported firearm and weapons possession violations (see Figure 5). Students were reported as being responsible for all of the 36 firearm incidents, were responsible for 99% of all the knife incidents and all of the other weapon incidents.

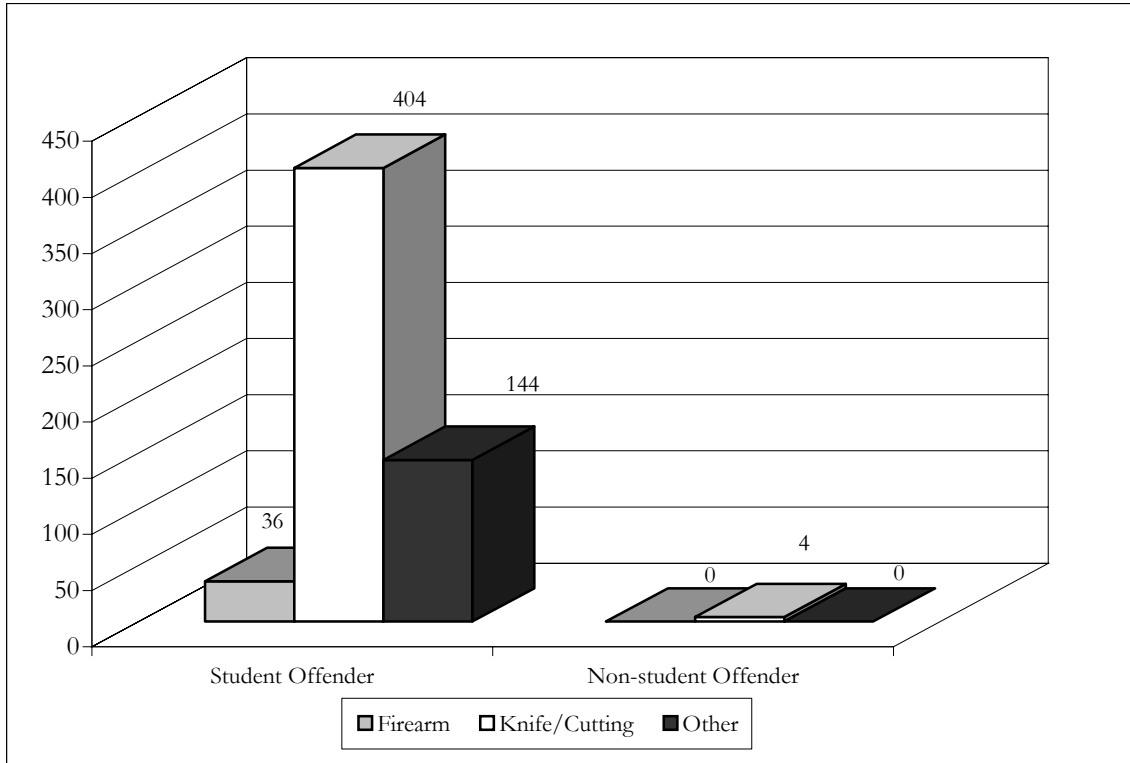


Figure 5: Firearm and weapons possession by offender – 2004-05 school year.

Gun-Free Schools Act Report

The Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA), Part F of Title XIV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, requires each state to have in effect a state law that requires school districts to expel any student who has brought a firearm to school, for a period of not less than one year. Any district receiving ESEA funds must refer these students to the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system. The state law must allow the chief educational administrative officer to modify the expulsion order on a case-by-case basis, and to elect to provide educational services to the student in an alternative setting. Each state must provide an annual report in December about the prior school year to the Secretary of Education about the implementation of the Act's requirements.

Of the 36 gun incidents in the 2004-05 school year, 6 resulted in expulsions, 8 were referred to an alternative school or program, 10 in modified discipline, and 3 were for students with disabilities (IDEA students), and 4 had no discipline reported (see Figure 6).

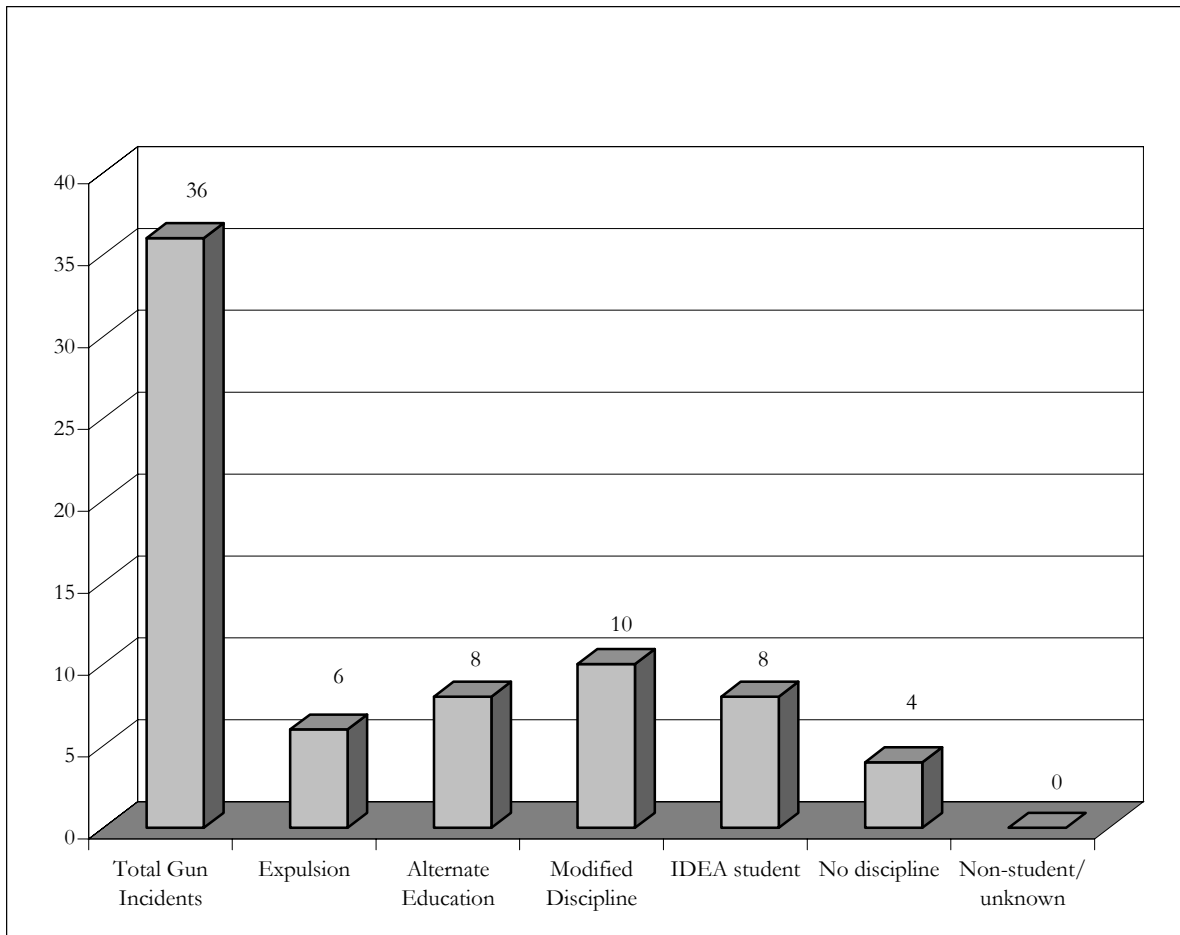


Figure 6: Number of gun incidents at the schools and the disciplinary measure taken in conformance with the Gun-Free Schools Act – 2004-05 school year.

Reports of Weapons Possession to Law Enforcement

The policy and practice of reporting most weapons incidents to law enforcement agencies may be an effective deterrent to prevent further incidents of weapons possession in the schools. Sixty-one percent of the 36 reported firearm incidents were reported to law enforcement, 40% of knife incidents were reported, and 17% of other weapons incidents were reported (see Figure 7).

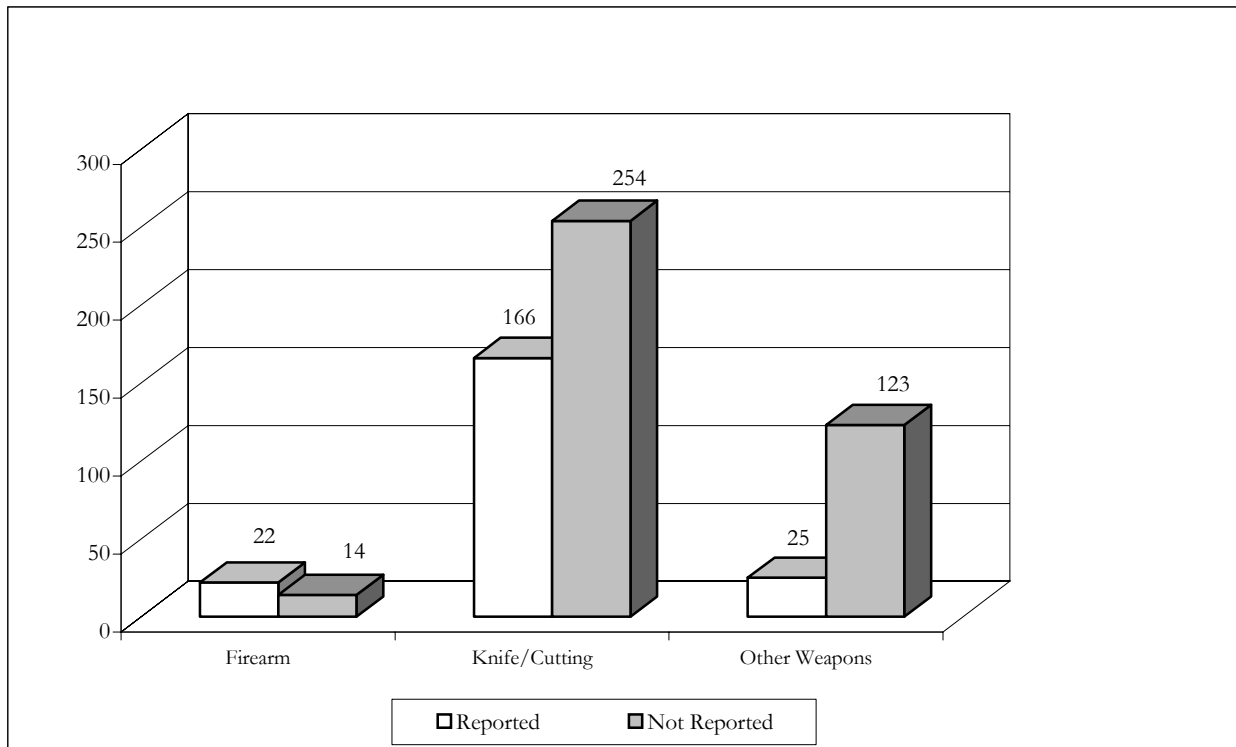


Figure 7: Reports of weapons possessions to law enforcement – 2004-05 school year.

INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE

A total of 8,932 incidents of violent crimes in the schools were reported during the 2004-05 school year (see Figure 8). More than two-thirds of all reported incidents were simple assault/battery.

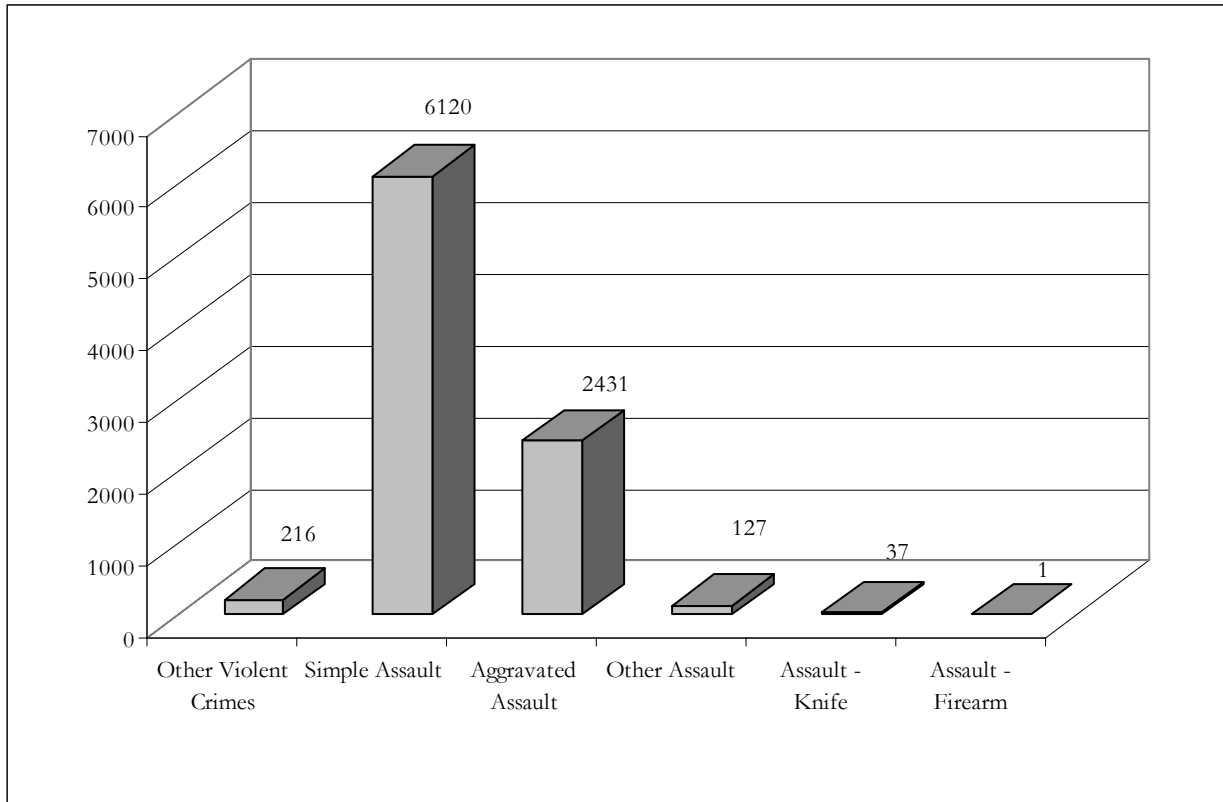


Figure 8: Types and number of reported incidents of violence in the schools – 2004-05 school year.

The following pages provide details about the victims and offenders of these violent incidents.

Students comprised the vast majority of offenders (99%) for the reported violent incidents (see Figure 9).

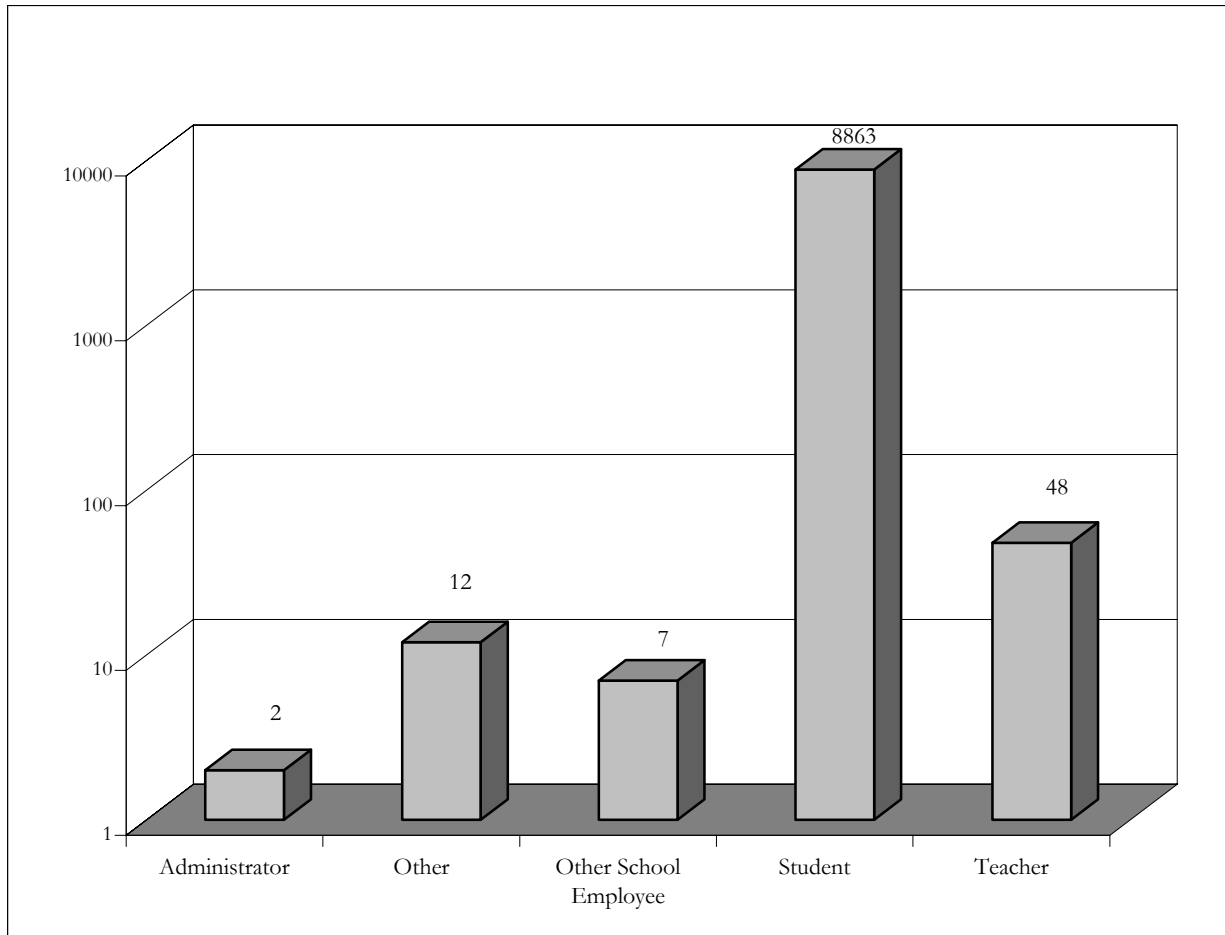


Figure 9: Number of incidents of violent crimes on school property by offender category – 2004-05 school year.

In addition to being the primary offenders, students account for the majority of the victims of these violent crimes. More than nine out of ten of the victims of violent incidents were students (see Figure 10).

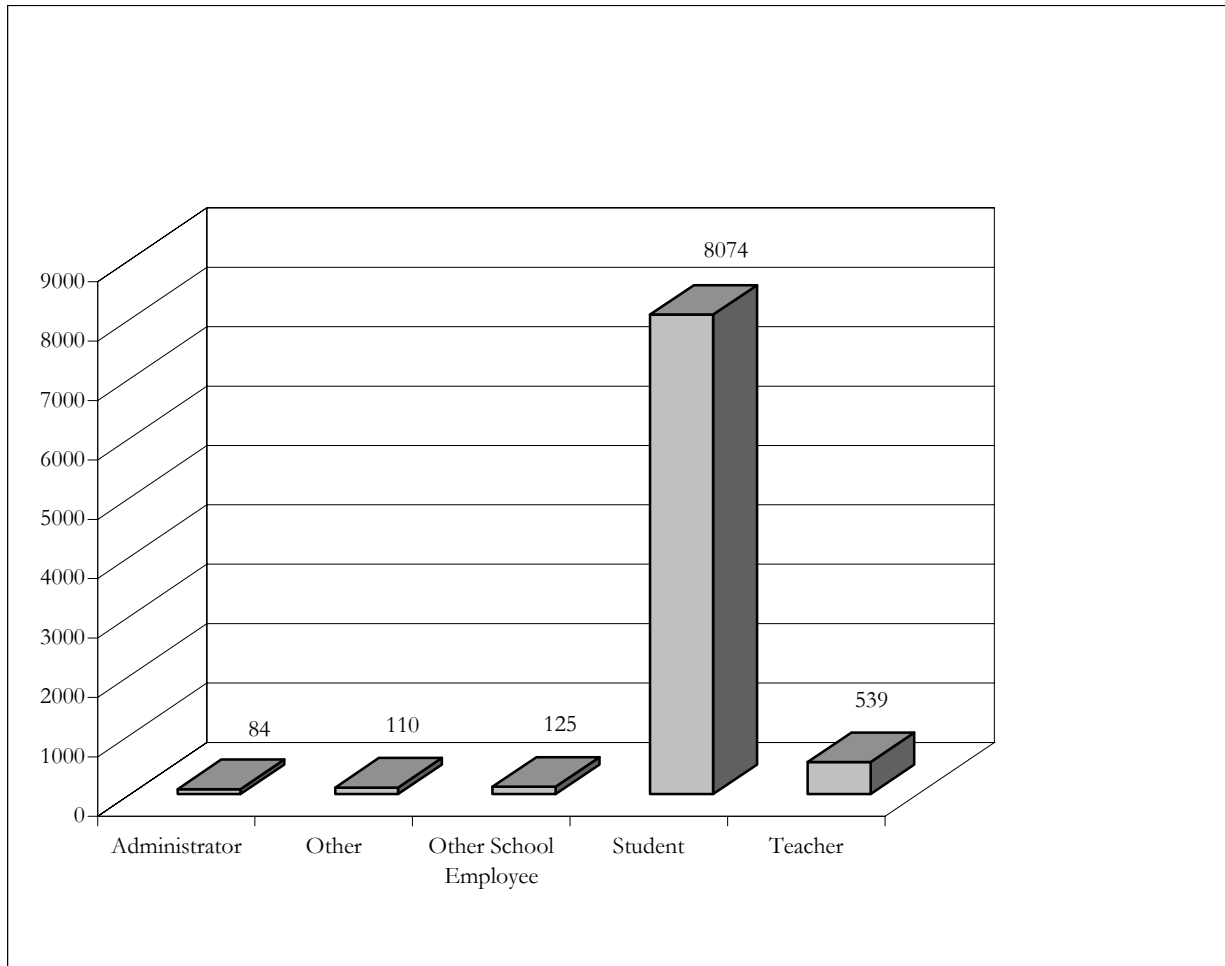


Figure 10. Number of incidents of violent crimes on school property by victim category: 2004-05 school year.

OTHER CRIMINAL OFFENSES

In addition to reports of violent crimes, assaults, weapons possession and vandalism, other criminal activities are also reported annually. These activities include gang-related activities, drug violations, and alcohol violations. Drug violations dominate this category of criminal incidents in the schools; the number of incidents of gang activity remains quite low (see Figure 11).

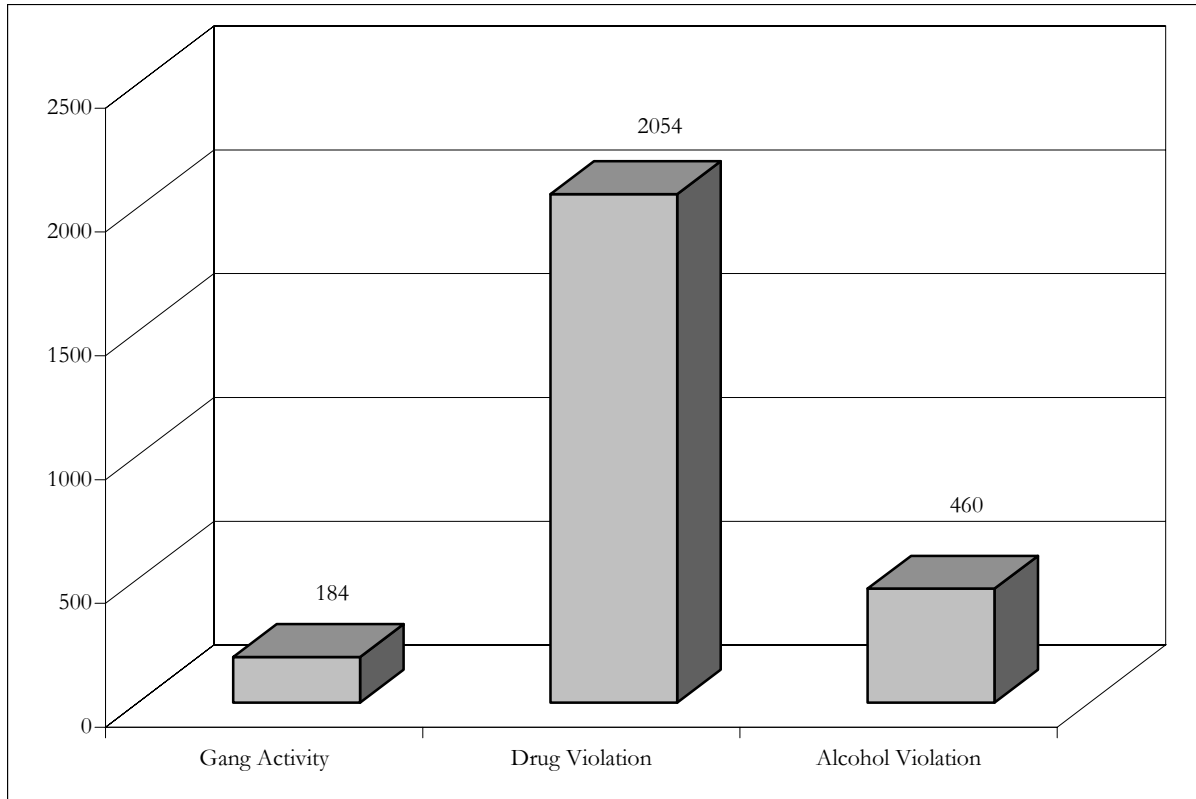


Figure 11. Number of other criminal activities, including gang activity, drug violations and alcohol violations – 2004-05 school year.

Responses to Incidents of Violence and Other Criminal Offenses

Most of the New Mexico schools' Safe School Plans include a progressive set of disciplinary procedures for incidents that occur in the schools. This begins with calling the student's parents or guardians at the first instance, then requiring the student in consultation with school officials and parents to develop a plan to change the offending behavior, and then, if another incident occurs, the consequence can be suspension.

Of the total of 8,932 reported violent incidents, expulsions constituted two-thirds of disciplinary actions (see Figure 12). In-school disciplinary measures comprised one out of five of all disciplinary measures; only 1% resulted in arrest or being referred to the justice system; and 1% were expelled. The latter two disciplinary measures, arrest and expulsion, are imposed for the most serious infractions. Only 1% had no reported disciplinary outcome, and 9% were described as having other or unknown disciplinary actions.

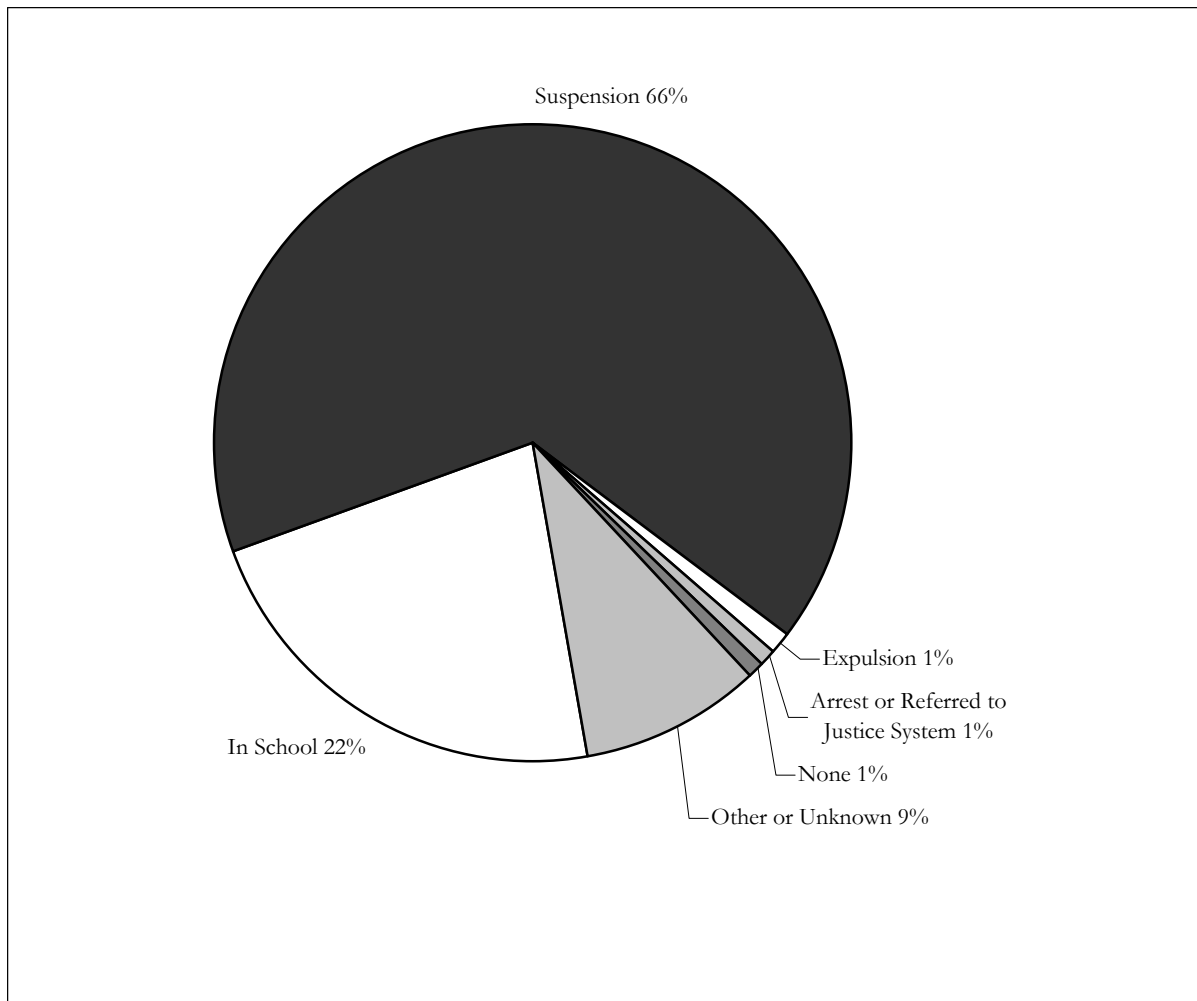


Figure 12: Discipline for violent incidents – 2004-05 school year.

School districts provided information about the number of incidents of both violent and other criminal activities that were reported to law enforcement officials. Schools were most likely to report drug or alcohol violations to law enforcement officials (see Figure 13).

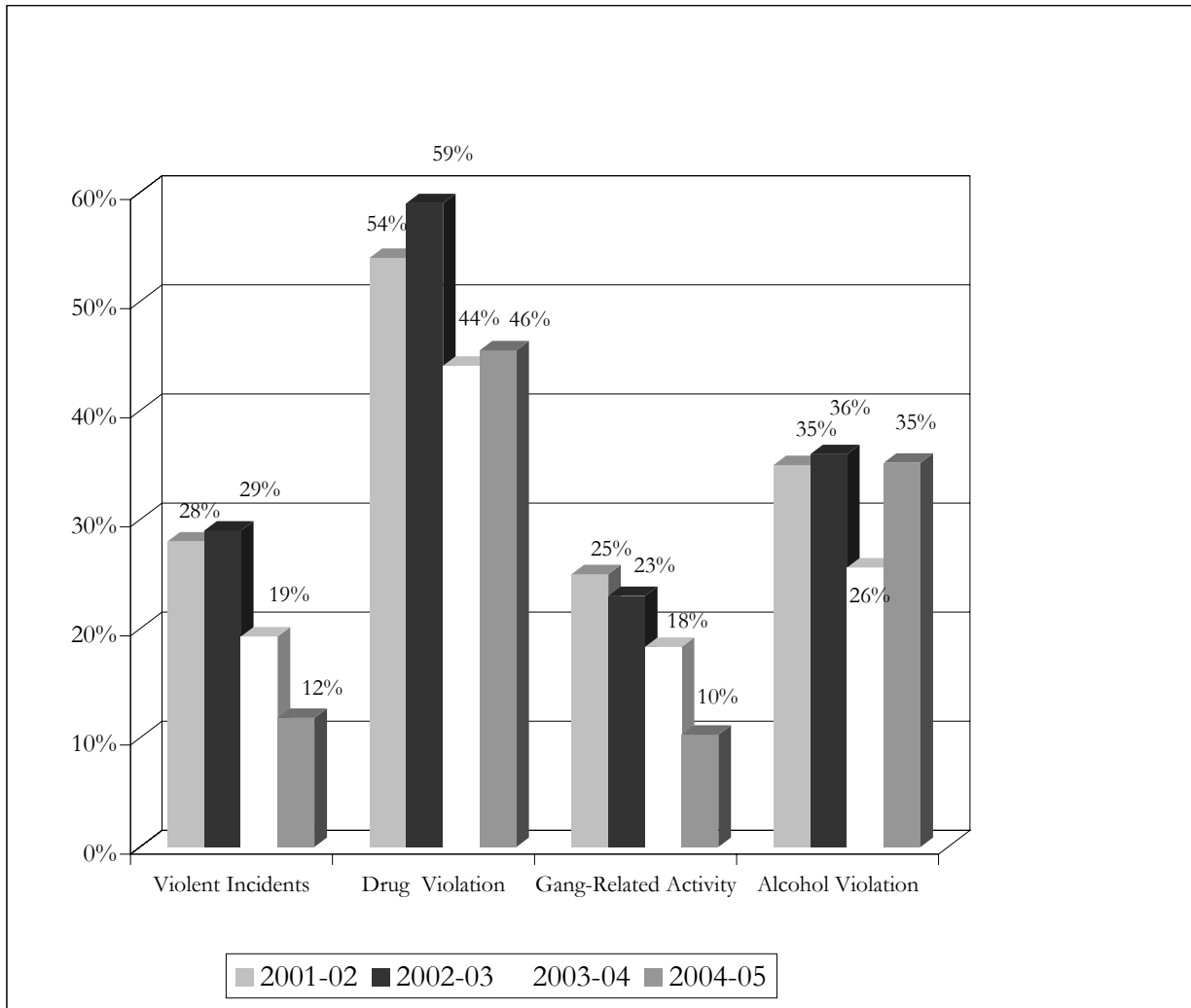


Figure 13: Percentage of all violent incidents, drug, alcohol, and gang-related incidents reported to law enforcement – 2004-05 school year.

Incidents of Vandalism

Vandalism in various forms creates conditions that seriously disrupt the school setting, causing financial loss and emotional distress to students and educators alike. Criminal damage accounted for 38% of all incidents of vandalism, larceny/theft accounted for 24%, graffiti accounted for 19%, breaking and entering for 9% and arson 3% (see Figure 14).

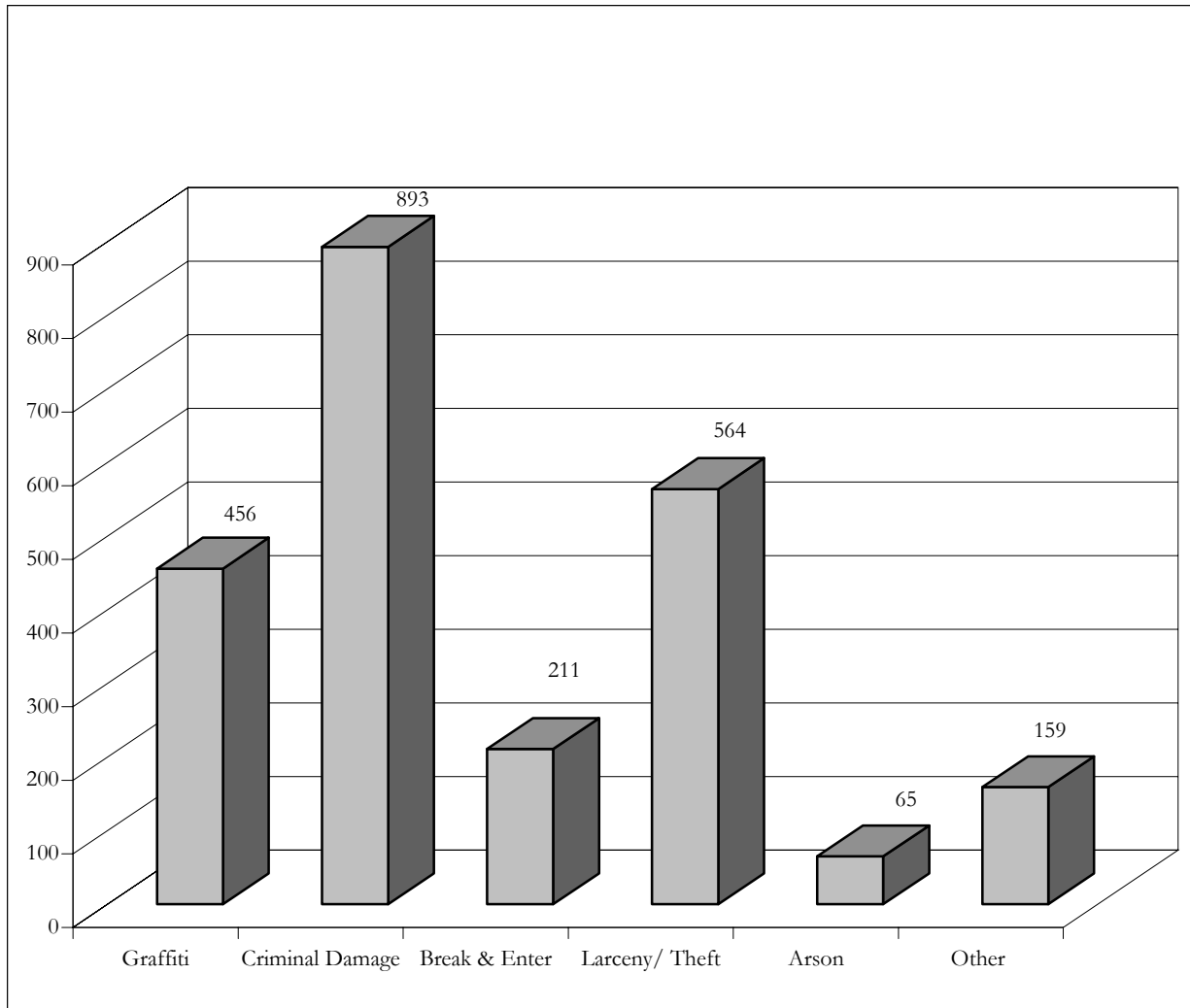


Figure 14: Incidents of vandalism (graffiti, criminal damage, breaking and entering, larceny/theft, arson, and other incidents) – 2004-05 school year.

The financial costs of vandalism can be quite high, especially in cases that involve arson and serious criminal damage to school buildings. Fortunately, both the number of incidents and the financial costs of these incidents dropped markedly in the 2004-05 school year compared to previous years. Overall, vandalism incidents cost the public schools, staff, students and parents \$245,099 (see Figure 15). The dollar cost for vandalism averaged just over \$100 per incident.

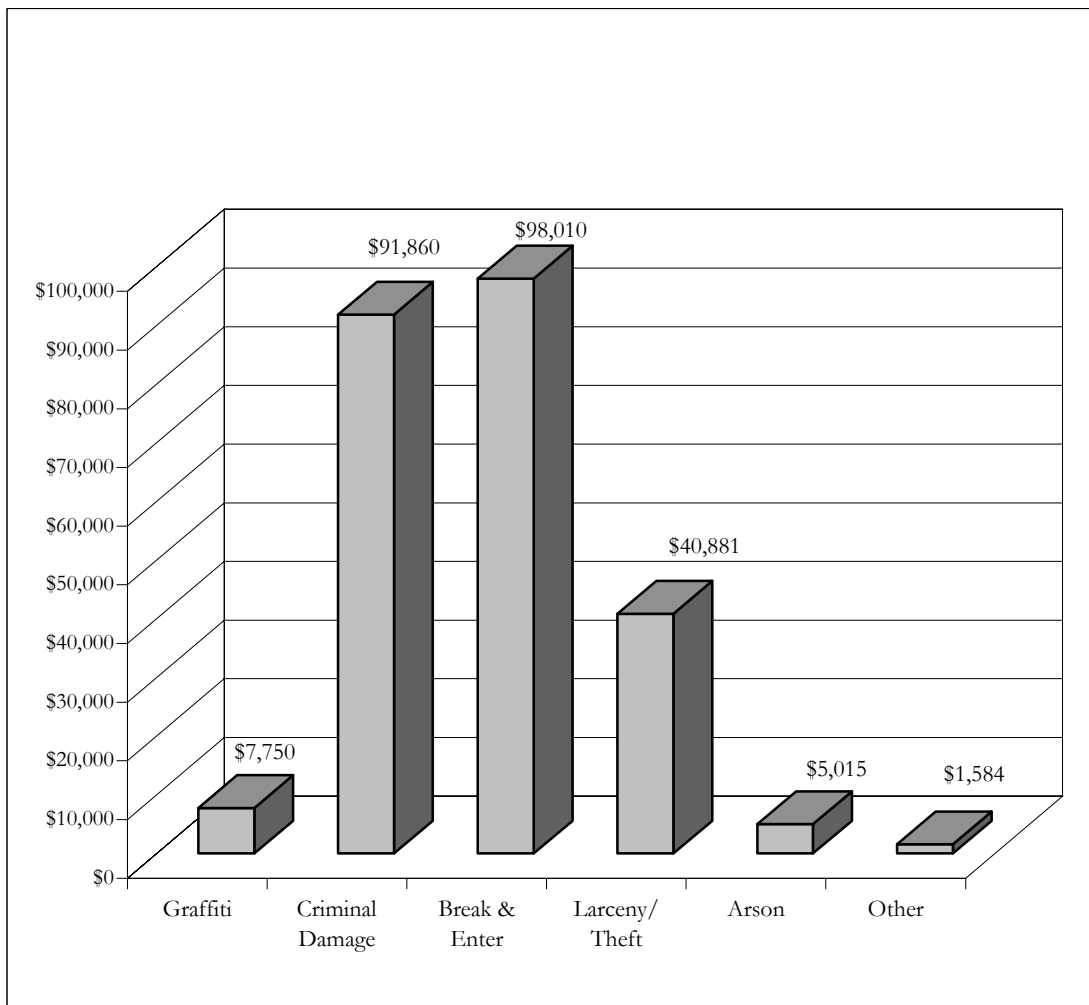


Figure 15: Costs of vandalism incidents – 2004-05 school year.

In response to the losses that can be incurred from vandalism, schools report the majority of incidents to law enforcement officials. In the 2004-05 school year, 51% of a total of 2,348 incidents of vandalism were reported to law enforcement (see Figure 16): 91% of the breaking and entering cases, 58% of the arson incidents, 57% of larceny/theft incidents, 49% of the criminal damage incidents, 46% of graffiti incidents, and 4% of “other” incidents were reported to law enforcement officials.

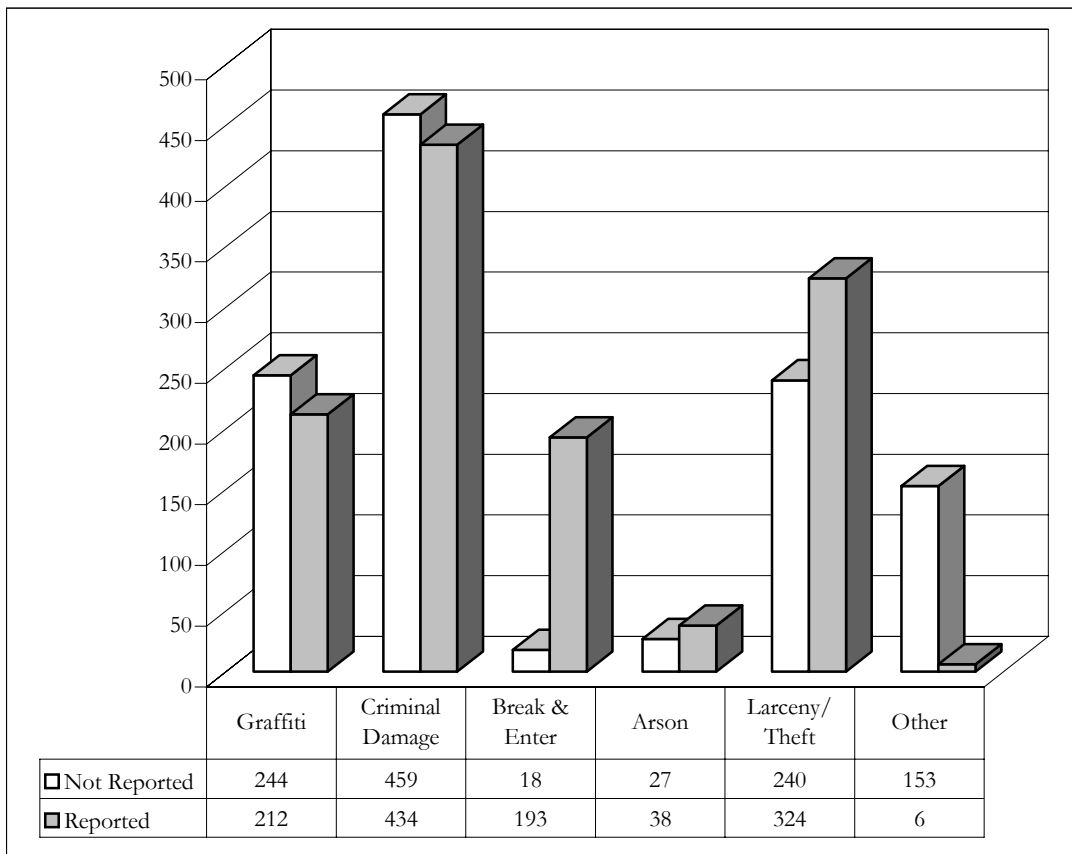


Figure 16: Cases of vandalism reported to law enforcement – 2004-05 school year.

SAFE SCHOOLS QUICK FACTS

- Nearly 3 million index crimes occur on or around American school campuses which is 16,000 crimes per school day or about 1 every 6 seconds when schools are in session.
- Alcohol, drugs and gangs all contribute to school violence.
- Fear of violence in schools affects attendance of students and causes attrition of staff.
- The goal of safe school planning is to create and maintain a positive and welcoming school climate, free of drugs, violence, intimidation and fear - an environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn in a climate which promotes the success and development of all children.
- The best safe school plans involve the entire community.
- Safe schools plans must be complemented by plans for reducing violence in neighborhoods.
- By developing a safe school plan, administrators can prevent many crises, help reduce violence and promote a positive educational climate.
- The first step in safe school planning is to place school safety on the education agenda, which involves making a personal and collective commitment toward creating a safe and welcoming school climate.
- Essentially, the three components of safe school planning include: 1) identifying where you are as a district and community specifying top concern and issues, 2) asking where you want to be and 3) calling for the development of a plan to deal with the difference between where you are where you want to be.
- There are six overall subjects that should be covered in a safe school plan: 1) the physical environment, 2) the social environment, 3) the cultural environment, 4) the economic environment, 5) the personal characteristics of individual students and staff members and 6) the local political environment.
- Safe school plans need to include crisis response plans, which can save time and energy and can maintain commitment when unforeseen problems arise.
- Every school should conduct an annual school safety assessment, which can be used as an evaluation and planning tool to determine the extent of school safety problems and the safety plan addressing them.

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence School Violence Fact Sheets: Safe School Planning (FS-SV09). These data were excerpted from the following book that was developed by CSPV through a grant from the W.T. Grant Foundation: Stephens, R.D. (1998). Safe School Planning. In D.S. Elliott, B. Hamburg, & K.R. Williams (Editors), *Violence in American Schools: a New Perspective*, (pp.253-289). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

WHY CREATE SAFE SCHOOL PLANS?

Keeping our schools safe is an area of vital importance for New Mexico. Planning for appropriate safety measures against a wide range of possible threats is the key to meeting this goal. It is not possible to develop a safety plan in the midst of an emergency. Instead, it is necessary to develop this plan for each school well in advance, and guarantee that all affected personnel in the school and community are familiar with it and with their own roles in implementing it. Ed Clarke, Director of the Department of School Safety and Security, Montgomery County, MD, made this clear: “We cannot afford to wait until the day of an emergency or crisis to develop a response plan or relationships. We need to plan well in advance of an emergency or crisis and develop those relationships which will prove to be critical during a crisis in the community” (Dorn & Dorn 2005, p. 68).

Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, stressed the importance of making a plan and being familiar with it: “As a former superintendent of the nation’s seventh largest school district, I know the importance of emergency planning. The midst of a crisis is not the time to start figuring out who ought to do what. At that moment, everyone involved – from top to bottom – should know the drill and know each other” (Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 2003, p. 1-1).

According to Michael Dorn, founder of Safe Havens International, research tells us that school-aged children are among the most at risk groups in our society for many crimes such as sexual assault, robbery, physical assault and murder. “When we take this high-risk group and put them into the building we call a school, we must be mindful that the risk is still there. In fact, some research indicates that many children report that they are more frequently victims of crime at school than in any other setting” (Dorn, 2003, p. 24).

“...Our children are dozens of times more likely to be killed by violence than fire, and thousands of times more likely to be serious injured by violence as compared to fire. And yet, in any school you can look around and see fire sprinklers, smoke alarms, fire exits, and fire extinguishers. If we can spend all that money and time preparing for fire (and we should, since every life is precious), shouldn't we spend time and money preparing for the thing that is far more likely to kill or injure a child? ... The most negligent, unprofessional, obscene words anyone can ever say is, 'It will never happen here.' Imagine the firefighter saying, 'There will never be a fire in this building, and we don't need those fire extinguishers.' ... Statistically speaking, it is very unlikely that there would ever be a fire here. But we would be morally, criminally negligent if we did not prepare for the possibility. And the same is far, far more true of school violence” (Dorn & Dorn 2005).

COMPONENTS OF SAFE SCHOOL PLANS

The experts agree that most good safe school plans contain specific components. According to Michael Dorn (Dorn, Thomas, Wong & Shephert, 2003), no safe schools plan is complete unless it includes written and detailed information to address all four phases of emergency management:

1. **Prevention and Mitigation** (a written strategy to prevent injuries, deaths and loss of or damage to property and to reduce the negative impact of natural disasters and other harmful events);
2. **Preparedness** (the development of a written emergency operations plan and supporting emergency preparedness measures to see that it can be effectively implemented under actual crisis conditions);
3. **Response** (guidance for all school staff on how the written procedures in the emergency operations plan can be successfully implemented in the event of an emergency, crisis, or disaster); and
4. **Recovery** (detailed and written advance preparations to guide school, mental health and other officials through the process to help schools impacted by a crisis recover from crisis situations).

The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools developed a guide for schools and communities in crisis planning (*Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, May 2003, U.S. Department of Education). In this guide, they described the information to be included in each of these phases of emergency planning and some key principals to be followed in developing a school safety plan:

Prevention and Mitigation: Although schools have no control over some of the hazards that may impact them, such as earthquakes or plane crashes, they can take actions to minimize or mitigate the impact of such incidents. Schools in earthquake-prone areas can mitigate the impact of a possible earthquake by securing bookcases and training students and staff what to do during tremors. Schools cannot always control fights, bomb threats, and school shootings. However, they can take actions to reduce the likelihood of such events. Schools may institute policies, implement violence prevention programs, and take other steps to improve the culture and climate of their campuses.

Preparedness: Crises have the potential to affect every student and staff member in a school building. Despite everyone's best efforts at crisis prevention, it is a certainty that crises will occur in schools. Good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis occurs. Being well prepared involves an investment of time and resources – but the potential to reduce injury and save lives is well worth the effort. Every school needs a crisis plan that is tailored to its unique characteristics.

Response: A crisis is the time to *follow the crisis plan*, not to make a plan from scratch.

Recovery: The goal of recovery is to return to learning and restore the infrastructure of the school as quickly as possible. Focus on students and the physical plant, and to take as much time as needed for recovery. School staff can be trained to deal with the emotional impact of the crisis, as well as to initially assess the emotional needs of students, staff, and responders.

What is a crisis? According to the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (2003), “crises range in scope and intensity from incidents that directly or indirectly affect a single student to ones that impact the entire community. Crises can happen before, during, or after school and on or off school campuses. The definition of a crisis varies with the unique needs, resources, and assets of a school and community. Staff and students may be severely affected by an incident in another city or state.... In essence, a crisis is a situation where schools could be faced with inadequate information, not enough time, and insufficient resources, but in which leaders must make one or many crucial decisions.”

School officials need to partner with emergency personnel and other stakeholders in the disaster preparedness process. They need to create mutual understanding between and among these stakeholders, so that when an emergency arises, everyone knows what to do, who is responsible for each step of the action, and each individual knows what they are expected to do. Previous safe schools reports in New Mexico have contained success stories that have demonstrated the importance of having these partnerships in place before a crisis, and how effective schools can be when every participant understands their role.

Key principles for effective crisis planning:

- Effective crisis planning begins with leadership at the top
- Crisis plans should not be developed in a vacuum
- Schools and districts should open channels of communication well before a crisis
- Crisis plans should be developed in partnership with other community groups, including law enforcement, fire safety officials, emergency medical services, as well as health and mental health professionals
- A common vocabulary is necessary
- Schools should tailor district crisis plans to meet individual school needs
- Plan for the diverse needs of children and staff
- Include all types of schools where appropriate
- Provide teachers and staff with ready access to the plan so they can understand its components and act on them
- Training and practice are essential for the successful implementation of crisis plans
- Crisis plans are living documents

USING A SAFE SCHOOL PLAN

“A safety and security plan that sits on the shelf has no value.” Ada Dolch United States Department of Education adjunct trainer and former Principal for the High School for Leadership and Public Service. – (Dorn & Dorn 2005)

Developing the safe school plan is an important first step, but putting it to use is clearly the second step. School safety experts recommend preparing all staff to understand the plan, practice responding quickly and efficiently to an emergency situation, and reminding parents and students about plan provisions. “Children and youth rely on and find great comfort in the adults who protect them” (Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 2003)

“School safety is the business, not only of school officials, but of law enforcement officers, paramedics, firefighters, emergency management personnel, public health officials, mental health professionals and a host of other local, state and federal experts. Students, parents and community resource agencies also can and do help make our schools safer when given the chance. Preventing tragedy and helping schools prepare to face major crisis situations is within the domain of every public safety employee and, in effect, every citizen. The general public as well as professionals around the nation will judge those who are charged with the protection of our children by how well a major school crisis situation is handled should it take place in your community.” (Dorn & Dorn 2005).

“If we take great care and love and pay close attention to detail, we can craft a safety net for our children in each school and, in fact, in the neighborhood that surrounds it... While we as a society care deeply for our children and those who work with children care greatly for them, today’s world requires a great deal of us if we want our youth to be safe.” (Dorn, 2003).

CONCLUSION

For nearly two decades, New Mexico's 89 local school districts have maintained and reported data on incidents of vandalism and violence to the Public Education Department. These data have been invaluable for monitoring district-level and statewide trends in school safety issues, as well as highlighting needs for improved efforts for ensuring safe schools.

The total number of incidents of vandalism and violence reported for the 2004-2005 school year were at their lowest point in more than six years. This number was at its highest during the 1998-99 school year, when 17,616 incidents were reported. Since then, the number of incidents has been declining steadily to the 11,316 incidents reported here.

The most significant improvements in school safety identified in this report included reductions in number of incidents of vandalism, violent incidents and other criminal activity, and fewer reports to law enforcement for incidents of violence, vandalism, firearms or other criminal activities. These improvements can be celebrated as tangible evidence of improved safety measures in every district.

Weapons were involved in 604 of the reported incidents of violence. Students were the offenders in all but 4 cases of violence, and reports were made to law enforcement in 213 of these cases. This was a dramatic improvement over the numbers of weapons-related incidents reported to law enforcement in previous years. The number of other violent crimes was up 18% over the previous year. Nearly seven out of ten of these incidents were simple assault/battery. Students comprised 99% of the offenders and more than 90% of the victims of these violent.

Other criminal offenses (gang activity, drug violations and alcohol violations) had increased somewhat from previous years. Drug violations, the most prevalent criminal activity, accounted for 38% of all reported offenses. Alcohol violations accounted for nearly 10% of these crimes. Drug violations were most likely to be reported to law enforcement (46% were reported). Fewer alcohol violations, violent incidents or gang activities were reported to law enforcement.

The overall number of incidents of vandalism has continued to decline from previous years. The financial costs of these incidents of vandalism, which had been as high as \$1.3 million in 2003-04, was down significantly to \$245,000, or about \$100 per incident.

These data show that for most measures of violence and vandalism, schools in New Mexico are becoming safer places for the students, staff and parents. These improvements may be credited to increased awareness of the problems of safety, as well as a positive approach for dealing with safety issues. Each school and school district in the state has worked hard to create safer, more enjoyable places for learning and growing. Their successes are reflected in the data in this report.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Internet Resources

U.S. Department of Education: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Office
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/index.html>; Telephone: (800) 624-0100

Join Together
<http://www.jointogether.org>; Telephone: (617) 437-1500

National Alliance for Safe Schools
<http://www.safeschools.org>; Telephone: (304) 496-8100

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
<http://www.nwrel.org/nwrcc> ; Telephone: (503) 275-9500

Ribbon of Promise: National Campaign to Prevent School Violence
<http://www.ribbonofpromise.org> (check “Resources”)
Telephone: (541) 726-0512

School Violence Resource Center
<http://www.svrc.net> (check “Links Arranged by Category” and “Resource Library”)
Telephone: (800) 635-6310

Lesson One
<http://www.lessonone.org> ; Telephone: (617) 247-2787

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov>

Federal Emergency Management Agency
<http://www.fema.gov>

World Health Organization
<http://www.who.int>

American Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org>

Journal of the American Medical Association
<http://jama.ama-assn.org>

American School Counselor Association
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities
www.ed.gov/emergencyplan/

Jane's Safe Schools Planning Guide for All Hazards
www.janes.com

Safe Havens International, Inc.
<http://www.safehavensinternational.org/>

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence School Violence Fact Sheets: Safe
School Planning (FS-SV09)
<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/publications/factsheets/schoolviolence/FS-SV09.html>

Selected Websites for Disaster Planning and Response in Schools

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan>

This website was designed to be a one-stop shop to help school officials plan for any emergency, including natural disasters, violent incidents and terrorist acts. Among the resources on this website is a document, *Emergency Planning*, which provides a fundamental overview of the issues to be considered in an emergency plan.

US Department of Homeland Security

<http://www.ready.gov/>

This is a federal website for the general public relating to emergency preparedness. Useful information is provided in non-technical terms.

National Mental Health Association

<http://www.nmha.org>

The NMHA provides several resources to help children and adults cope with stress and other topics. They also offer a toll-free phone line at (800) 969-NMHA (6642).

Federal Emergency Management Agency

<http://www.fema.gov/kids/teacher.htm>

Resources for parents and teachers (curriculum and activities, school safety, disaster preparedness, fire safety, etc.).

Los Angeles County Office of Education

<http://www.lacoe.edu/lacoeweb/orgs/158/index.cfm>

Web site of Safe Schools Center which provides technical assistance and training to school personnel in Los Angeles.

National Association of School Psychologists

<http://www.nasponline.org/index2.html>

This website provides information that ranges from crisis intervention to violence prevention for children and creation of safe schools.

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities

Resource List for Disaster Preparedness & Response for Schools

<http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/disaster.cfm>

This website provides resource lists on numerous categories including Safe Schools.

National Association of School Nurses

<http://www.nasn.org> (Check “Resources & Information” and then “Position Statements”).

This website provides position statements on school nurse roles in emergency and bioterrorism emergency preparedness.

New Mexico Homeland Security Office

<http://www.governor.state.nm.us/homeland.php?mm=4>

This website provides updates on safety and security issues affecting all New Mexican citizens.

National Education Association

<http://www.nea.org/>

Search for publications on crisis communication guidelines and toolkit

National School Safety and Security Services

<http://www.schoolsecurity.org>

This is the website for a national consulting firm specializing in school security and school emergencies / crisis preparedness training, school security assessments, and school safety consulting.

Project SAVE: Safe Schools Against Violence in Education

“Guidance Document for School Safety Plans – April 2001

<http://www.mhric.org/scss/ProjectSAVE.pdf>

Developed by the State Education Department of New York, this document provides comprehensive information for developing school safety plans that will apply to a variety of emergency incidents.

The SafetyZone

<http://www.safetyzone.org>

This website is a clearinghouse for information and materials related to school safety.

Florida Department of Education

http://www.unf.edu/dept/fie/sdfs/notes/crisis_mngmnt.pdf

This website provides information on crisis management preparedness including how to prevent, prepare, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency

<http://www.riema.ri.gov>

This website provides guidance for schools on emergency procedures.

Virginia Model School Crisis Management Plan

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/model.html>

This crisis plan outlines the responsibilities of key school personnel such as the principal, teachers, school nurse, counselor and custodial staff.

Selected Websites for School Safety Training Resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/crslst.asp>

Independent study course list on all aspects of disaster planning and response

New Mexico Department of Public Safety

Office of Emergency Services and Security

http://www.dps.nm.org/emergency/training_conference.htm

A list of locally available courses in a variety of emergency management areas

Northwest Center for Public Health Practice

University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine

<http://www.nwcphp.org/bioterrorism-curriculum-program-launches-web-site>

The UW Emergency Preparedness and Bioterrorism Awareness Curriculum Development Program's Web site houses information about the program and its faculty and staff. It focuses on developing and adapting a multidisciplinary curriculum in bioterrorism and public health emergency preparedness to train health profession students at the University of Washington Academic Medical Center, as well as the Washington State University College of Pharmacy.

University of Findlay, Center for Terrorism Preparedness, Findlay, Ohio

<http://seem.findlay.edu>

The University of Findlay's School of Environmental and Emergency Management's web site lists training, education and consulting services in the areas of environmental safety & health training as well as terrorism preparedness.

Crisis Response Team

<http://www.healthinschools.org/sh/CrisisResponse.pdf>

<http://www.healthinschools.org/sh/schoolresponse.asp>

These websites provide information on how to put together a crisis response team.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Emergency Preparedness and Response.

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/planning/index.asp>

This website contains preparedness resources for specific types of emergencies (personal, businesses, healthcare facilities, state and local, etc.).

National Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster>

Be prepared before disaster strikes – information on the best way to make your family and your home safer.

Videos

Bullets Have No Names on Them (1993). Available from Coronet/MTI Film and Video, 108 Wilmont Road, Deerfield, IL 60015.

Drug-Free Schools: A Generation of Hope (1994). Available from Southeastern Regional Vision for Education, 41 Marietta Street, NW, Suite 100, Atlanta, GA 30303. (800) 659-3204, (404) 577-7737.

Freedom from Violence Series – *The Gang Alternative; Taking the Lid Off Anger; Resolving Conflict Peacefully; Safe Environment* (1993). Available from Altschul Group Corp., 1560 Sherman Ave., Evanston, IL 60201.

Kids in the Crossfire: Violence in America (1993). Available from MPI HomeVideo. (800) 323-0443.

Lesson One: Teaching the ABC's of Life (2003). Available from The Lesson One Foundation, Inc., 245 Newbury Street, Suite 2F, Boston, MA 02116.

Sometin' To Do: Kids and Crime (1993). Available from Turner Entertainment Network, Public Affairs, 1050 Techwood Drive, NW, Atlanta, GA 30318.

School Crisis: Under Control; High Risk Youth: At the Crossroads; Set Straight on Bullies; and What's Wrong With This Picture. Available from The National School Safety Center, 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362. (805) 373-9977.

Tragic Consequences: Teenagers and Guns (1995) and **Violence Prevention: Inside Out** (1993). Available from United Learning, Inc., 6633 W. Howard ST., Niles, IL 60714. (800) 424-0362.

Wasted! Guns & Teens, Lives & Dreams (1996). Available from National Center for Drug Abuse, Violence, and Recovery. 102 Hwy 81 North, Calhoun, KY 42327-0009. (800) 962-6662.

Connect With Parents (2003). Available from CWK Network, Inc.
www.connectingwithkids.com

Books and Reports

Innocent Targets: When Terrorism Comes to School (2005).

Michael Dorn & Chris Dorn. Safe Havens International Inc., Canada.

Safe Schools Report 2002-2003 & 2003-2004 (2005).

New Mexico Public Education Department and the University of New Mexico Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

Safe Schools Report 2001-2002 (2004).

New Mexico Public Education Department and the University of New Mexico Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

Jane's Safe Schools Planning Guide for all Hazards (2004).

Michael Dorn, Gregory Thomas, Marleen Wong and Sonayia Shephert

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: a Guide for Schools and Communities (2003).

United States Department of Education.

Guidance and Definitions for Collecting and Reporting Incidents of Violence and Vandalism in New Mexico Schools (2004).

New Mexico State Department of Education.

Safe Schools Report 2000-2001 (2003).

New Mexico Public Education Department and the University of New Mexico Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

Weakfish: Bullying Through the Eyes of a Child (2003).

Michael Dorn, Safe Havens International, Inc.

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities (2003).

The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education.

How to Talk to Your Kids About School Violence (2003).

Dr. Ken Druck, Onomatopoeia, Inc.

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities

(2003). The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education.
edpubs@inet.ed.gov 1-877-433-7827.

Connect With Parents (2003).

Available from CWK Network, Inc.
www.connectingwithkids.com

Safe School Planning (1998).

Stephens, R.D. (1998). In D.S. Elliott, B. Hamburg, & K.R. Williams (Editors), *Violence in American Schools: A New Perspective*, (pp.253-289). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Planning for Safe Schools in New Mexico: Report of the Safe Schools Forum (1997).

New Mexico State Department of Education, School Health Unit; Santa Fe, NM. (505) 827-1804.

Antisocial Behavior in School: Strategies and Best Practices (1995).

Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.; Pacific Grove, CA.

Violence in Schools: How to Build a Prevention Program from the Ground Up

(1995). Oregon School Study Council; Eugene, Oregon.

Conflict in the Classroom: Drawing the Line on Bad Behavior (1994).

New York State United Teachers; Albany, NY. (518) 459-5400.

A Study of Safety and Security in The Public Schools of New York (1994).

New York State Education Department; Albany, NY 12234. (518) 473-7155.

Violence and the Schools (1994).

Georgia Department of Education; Atlanta, GA. (404) 656-2600.

Mediation: Getting to Win-Win! (1994).

Peace Education Foundation, Inc.; Miami, FL.

Violence in the Schools: A National, State, and Local Crisis (1994).

New York State Education Department; Albany, NY 12234. (518) 474-1311.

The Prevention of Youth Violence: A Framework for Community Action (1993).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mail Stop 36, 4770 Buford Hwy NE; Atlanta, GA 30341. (404) 488-4646.

Reaching the Goals: Safe, Disciplined and Drug Free Schools (1993).

U.S. Department of Education, The Goals 6 Work Group; Washington, DC.

Schools Free of Drugs and Violence. Questions and Answers on Reaching National Education Goal 6. U.S. Department of Education; Washington, DC.

Curriculum/Training--Educational Programs

Abrams Peace Education Foundation
3550 Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 400; Miami, FL 33137. (305) 576-5075.

Alternative to Violence Project
15 Rutherford Place; New York, NY 10003. (212) 951-7199.

Boston Conflict Resolution Program
Boston Area Educators for Social Responsibility
19 Garden Street; Cambridge, MA 02138. (617) 492-8820.

Bureau for At-Risk Youth
135 Dupont Street; Plainview, NY 11803-0760. (800) 999-6884.

Comprehensive Assistance Center – Region Seven
555 East Constitution; Norman, OK 73072. (405) 325-1711.

Children’s Creative Response to Conflict
P.O. Box 271; 521 N. Broadway; Nyack, NY 10960. (914) 353-1796.

Committee for Children
2203 Airport Way South, Suite 500; Seattle, WA 98134-2027. (800) 634-4449.

Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment
17 Gerry Street; Cambridge, MA 02138. (617) 864-0999.

Educators for Social Responsibility
23 Garden Street; Cambridge, MA 02138. (617) 492-1764.

Harvard Negotiation Project
500 Pound Hall; Cambridge, MA 02138. (617) 495-1684.

Hawaii Mediation Program, University of Hawaii at Manoa
West Hall Annex 2, Room 222; 1776 University Avenue; Honolulu, HI 96822.

Iowa Peace Institute
P.O. Box 480; Grinnell, IA 50112. (515) 236-4880.

Kids on the Block
9385-C Gerwig Lane; Columbia, MD 21046. (800) 245-KIDS.

National Consortium on Alternatives of Youth at Risk
5250 17th Street, Suite 107; Sarasota, FL 34235. (800) 245-7133.

National Crime Prevention Council
1000 Connecticut Avenue, 13th Floor; Washington, DC 20036. (202) 466-6272.

National Resources Center for Youth Services
202 West 8th Street; Tulsa, OK 74119-1419.

National Safe Kids Campaign
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW; Washington, DC 20004-1707.

National School Safety Center
141 Duesenberg Drive, Suite 11; Westlake Village, CA 91362. (805) 373-9977.

New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution
800 Park Avenue, SW; Albuquerque, NM 87102. (505) 247-0571.

New Mexico Public Education Department, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program
120 South Federal, Room 207; Santa Fe, NM 87501. (505) 827-1827.

Resolving Conflict Creatively
163 Third Avenue, #239; New York, NY 10003. (212) 260-6290.

Society for Prevention of Violence
3109 Mayfield Road, Room 205; Cleveland, OH 44118. (216) 371-5545.

Teaching Students to be Peacemakers
7708 Cornelia Drive; Edina, MN 55435.

Wholistic Stress Control Institute
P.O. Box 42481; 3480 Greenbriar Parkway, Suite 310-B; Atlanta, GA 30331.