Challenges associated with implementing school-wide safety interventions

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Presentation Outline

I. What does it mean to be a safe school?
   ▪ What dimensions of safety are most important?
   ▪ Relative vs. Absolute Measures

II. How do stakeholders interpret safety?
   ▪ Students, Principals, Teachers, Parents
   ▪ A case study on student perceptions of safety

III. Comprehensive School Safety Interventions
   ▪ Implementing systematic changes in evolving systems
   ▪ A case study in coordinating comprehensive changes
The Many Roles of the School

- What are schools responsible for?
  - Reading, Writing, Arithmetic
  - Point of contact for social services
  - Child care before and after school
  - Prevention programming
    - Drug use, dating violence, safe online behavior, delinquency
- School Safety

- What is the primary task of the school?
  - The 3 “Rs” or Safety
What does it mean to be a safe school?

- **How do we judge whether a school is safe or not?**
  
  - **Relative school safety measures**
    - Do we simply compare schools against one another, or track measures of school safety across time?
  
  - **Absolute school safety measures**
    - Are there benchmarks we should achieve?
      - Less than 5 violent incidents per 1,000 students per year
    - What dimensions are most important?
      - Violence, Bullying, Theft, Threats
      - School Climate, Fear, Disorder
Relative School Safety: General Victimization (1992-2016)

Figure 1: Nonfatal Victimization at School and Away from School (per 1,000 students) (ages 12-18)
Absolute School Safety: Benchmarks

- **Persistently Dangerous Schools**
  - Not Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (G.W. Bush)
  - Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (Obama)

- **What is it?**
  - All Students attending a “persistently dangerous school”….or
  - A student who had been victimized in a particular way
  - **Transfer to a safer school at no cost to the student**

- **Federally enforced, but State Defined**
  - Implications?
Example of State Definitions: New York

- **Objective Standard**
  - **School Violence Index (SVI)**
    - Total number of violent incidents
    - Severity of individual incidents
      - Weight by incident type (homicide, rape, assault)
    - Total number of students
  - A school with an SVI greater than 1.5 for 2 consecutive years = “persistently dangerous”
New York “SVI” Example

School A  Student Population = 1,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yearly Violent Incident Totals</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with Serious Injury</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Assault</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SVI = 1.67
Example of State Definitions: North Carolina

- **Subjective Standard**
  - At minimum 2 “violent offenses” and 5 or more such offenses per 1,000 students for two consecutive years
  - **AND** the State Board of Education determines the conditions will likely continue.

- **Violence =**
  - (A) Homicide (B) Assault Resulting in Serious Bodily Injury (C) Assault Involving Use of a Weapon
  - (D) Rape (E) Sexual Offense (F) Sexual Assault
  - (G) Kidnapping (H) Robbery with a Dangerous Weapon (I) Indecent Liberties with a Minor
Persistently Dangerous Schools: 2005 through 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>All other 44 states</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Total</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
America's Deathtrap Schools

American teens are shaping a new kind of debate about gun violence—but why now?

Sandy Hook shooting: What happened?

Twenty-six people -- 20 students and six adults -- were shot and killed at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut on December 14. Details continue to emerge about what precisely happened. Below is a timeline of events that compiles the latest reporting. FULL COVERAGE »

Early 12/14
Inside the school
First responders arrive

Before events at the school
At some point before he went to the school, investigators believe Adam Lanza, 20, killed his mother, Nancy Lanza. He grabbed three guns from the house -- a semi-automatic AR-15 assault rifle made by Bushmaster and pistols made by Glock and Sig Sauer -- and went to the elementary school wearing black fatigues and a military vest, according to a law enforcement official.

The above weapons are similar to the ones found with the suspect: A Bushmaster rifle, a Glock handgun, and a Sig-Sauer handgun.

Classes were under way at the school. Approximately 700 students were present.
Safe School Transitions: A Case Study

Flint Community Schools (FCS): Flint, MI

- Population 98,000 (2015); down from 197,000 (1960)
- Financial emergency status (2002-04; 2011-15)
- High rates of crime
- Water crisis
Safe School Transitions Study Design

- Survey of all FCS students within two years of their high school transition (Grades 5-8)
  - Comparison of elementary and early high school students on numerous dimensions of school safety.
- Panel in-depth interviews with students in final year of elementary school (Grades 6-8)
  - Three total interviews (93 students)
    - What do students anticipate in their new school? (Spring ‘17)
    - What are their initial impressions of their new school? (Fall ‘17)
    - How did their first year go? Do they plan to graduate? (Spring ‘18)
Interviewer: Do you know what high school you would like to attend? And this doesn't have to be in Flint?

Interviewee: “A Middle School Outside Flint”

Interviewer: What do you expect it to be like?

Interviewee: Safe.

Interviewer: Safe? Safe how?

Interviewee: Security, nobody can come in and steal things or come in with guns and kill people or hurt people.
Student Aspirations for Next School Year

- Interviewer: You have to go to “A Flint High School”? Do you want to go to “A Flint High School”?
- Interviewee: Uh uh (No)
- Interviewer: Why don't you want to go to “A Flint High School”? 
- Interviewee: Because it is a family tradition, my mom went there, my dad went there and my sister went there but I just don't want to go there because I feel like I'm gonna have the same problems that I have here.
- Interviewer: Yeah what kind of problems?
- Interviewee: I feel like I'm gonna be harassed again and then people are going to talk about me again.
- Interviewer: Yeah. Have you talked to anybody about that?
- Interviewee: Only my mom.
Student Aspirations for Next School Year

- **Interviewer:** Have you heard anything about “High School in Flint”?
- **Interviewee:** Yes.
- **Interviewer:** Yeah? What did you hear?
- **Interviewee:** There was a lot more fights than there was in this school.
- **Interviewer:** Yeah, how does that make you feel?
- **Interviewee:** It makes me feel safer that they told me, because now I know what happens if I do go there.
- **Interviewer:** What do you expect of “The School Outside Flint”?
- **Interviewee:** Well, I expect it to be less scary because my friends are there.
What did Students Report Across these Schools? (Survey Data)

- School-Based Victimization Experiences in 2017
  - 9 total questions on school-based victimization
- Examples: How many times in the last 6 months...
  - Did anyone use force to take something away from you that you were carrying or wearing at school?
  - Did anyone hit or attack you on purpose with an object or weapon while at school?
  - Did anyone hit or attack you without using an object or weapon while at school?
  - Did someone threaten to hurt you at school, when you thought they might really do it?
High School vs. Elementary School Victimization Experiences

High School vs. Elementary School Victimization Prevalence (last 6 months)

- Prevalence Elementary: 62.6%
- Prevalence High School: 55.1%
High School vs. Elementary School Victimization Experiences

High School vs. Elementary School Victimization Frequency (last 6 months)

- Frequency Elementary: 4.0
- Frequency High School: 4.7

- Blue bar: Frequency Elementary
- Red bar: Frequency High School
Student Follow-Up Interviews (Fall 2017): First semester in “A Flint High School”

- How does high school compare to elementary school?
  - “A lot of fights. Arguments, and stuff like ... they get in a lot of fights and stuff.”
  - “It's very huge and there's a lot of fights going on.”
  - “Sometimes there's fights and sometimes there's stuff that breaks out and people get maced.”
  - “I guess that there are more fights, but that's also because there's more people and we have to transition by ourselves to classes and we have five minutes to get there.”
Student Follow-Up Interviews:
First semester in “Middle School Outside Flint”

- How does high school compare to elementary school?
  - “A lot of people like to bully people. I mean they do it just to get a laugh out of it, they make other people believe what they want to believe.”
  - “I don’t like the people. Because they always have to start drama here.”
  - “I just don't like the way some, most of the kids behave because I don't think it's acceptable for school...They just argue and just do stuff that's not right, like fighting and stuff.”
Student Follow-Up Interviews: First semester in “A Flint High School”

- Is your school safe?
  - “I think, yeah. Because, there aren't any dangers, but people probably fight and stuff like that, but I don't think it's dangerous, not unsafe to be here.”
  - “Yeah. I mean nobody can bring weapons or anything in because there's metal detectors at the door, so that's a good thing.”
  - Most frequent- “Yes,” “Yeah,” “Mm-hmm”
Student Follow-Up Interviews:
First semester in “Middle School Outside Flint”

- **Is your school safe?**
  - “You could say it is. For me it is, I don't know about others, because I feel safe, but I'm not really outside with all the drama and stuff. I try to be my own guide and just hang around my friends, not just be all tripping about all that stuff going on and everything.”
  - Most frequent- “Yes,” “Yeah”
Student Follow-Up Interviews (Fall 2017): First semester in “A Flint High School”

- Is this school more or less safe than your old school (i.e., elementary school)?
  - “More. Here is safe.”
  - “Probably more because at my old school we only had one security guard”
  - “More safe. Well, our old school didn't really have a security system besides its doors locked at a certain time.”
  - “More. The old school had no security or police officer. They only stopped for about 15 minutes a day and left, and that was it.”
Student Follow-Up Interviews:
First semester in “Middle School Outside Flint”

- Is this school more or less safe than your old school (i.e., elementary school)?
  - “It's more safe than the other school. The only protection was just the main doors that would stay locked.”
  - “More. Because they have extra measures.
  - “Sometimes it's more, but sometimes it's less… There's like hall monitors and stuff like that …but, because, like, sometimes, there will be fights happening in the bathroom and teachers come in there later.”
Student Versus Principal and Parent Perceptions

- School Safety Concerns Focused on the High Schools in the Flint Community Schools
  - Absolute levels of violence and conflict are too high according to parents and principals
    - Students shared these concerns prior to their transition to high school
  - Students DID NOT view the high school as unsafe
    - Students liked the added security measures in their new schools.
- School Safety was described in different terms in Flint versus the surrounding communities.
  - Fights versus drama
- Pattern of feeling *elementary school was less safe*
How do we improve school safety?

- We must focus on what matters in each context.
  - It is important to understand the specific issues at hand, across all stakeholders.
- How do we know what works?
- How do we garner support for safety programs?
  - Financially
  - Human Capital
    - Training and Technical Support
  - Social Capital- “Buy In”
    - Grassroots
    - Leadership
GISD School Climate Project

- We must focus on what matters in each context.
    - State Mandate to move away from exclusionary practices.

- How do we garner support for safety programs?
  - Achieve local goals with the programs and practices that are fundable at the time.
  - Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)
    - Not a program, but a system for problem identification and planning.
Genesee Intermediate School District

- 21 public school districts
- 13 public school academies (charters)
- 67,000 students
INTEGRATING 3 EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

IMPROVING

Restorative Practices

Mental Health First Aid

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

SCHOOL CLIMATE & SAFETY
INTEGRATING 3 EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

1. Restorative Practices (RP)
   - Improve communication
   - Resolve conflicts
   - Strengthen school community
   - More effectively respond to misbehavior

2. Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)
   - Aid youth experiencing challenges in mental health, substance use, or crises

3. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
   - Creating a climate of safety through changes to a school’s physical environment
Multi-Tier Support System

Tier 3: Intensive Interventions
- Functionally Based
- Individualized for Few
- Highly Specific

Tier 2: Targeted Interventions
- Supplemental
- Some Students
- Reduce Risk

Universal Supports & Prevention
- Core Instruction
- All Students
- Preventive/Proactive
Tier 2: Targeted Interventions
- Mental Health First Aid
- Restorative Practices

Tier 3: Intensive Interventions
- Mental Health First Aid
- Restorative Practices

Universal Supports & Prevention
- CPTED
- Restorative Practices

All Students
CLUSTER RANDOMIZED CONTROL DESIGN

- **20 buildings total**
  - 10 treatment / intervention schools
  - 10 control group buildings
- **Two cohorts staggered over three years**
  - 10 schools in Cohort 1 (5 treatment, 5 control)
    - 2017-18, 2018-19
  - 10 schools in Cohort 2 (5 treatment, 5 control)
    - 2018-19, 2019-20
CRITERIA FOR RANDOMIZED SELECTION

• Building must have at least two of grades 4, 5, 6
• A Free and Reduced lunch rate of 50% or higher
• Active implementation of PBIS
  • Two active cohorts in the county.
• Commitment to the project & activities from administrators
GRANT ACTIVITIES

• Three person leadership team (3-PLT):
  • School Climate Specialist,
  • Part time SRO
  • School leader (Assistant Principal, Team Leader)

• Trainings / Certifications for staff
  • Mental Health First Aid
  • Restorative Practices

• Longitudinal Data Collection (including control)

• Focus groups (school staff, students, 3-PLT)
Initial Resistance Among Teachers:
- "Don’t take away my snap suspensions"
- "I’m concerned about starting another program and only partly implementing."

Trainings / Certifications for staff
- Restorative practices training
  - Variable number of available in-service days
  - Substitute Teacher Shortage
  - Summer training - Who pays their salary?
What police department will supply the SRO?
- Some communities did not want a particular agency involved.
- Not all preferred agencies had available officers.

Will we be in the treatment or control group?
- We had schools that only wanted to participate if they were in their preferred treatment condition.
Delayed Implementation: Restorative Justice

• **Active Implementation of PBIS**

  **When can we start?**

  **Versus**

  **Do we have to start this year?**

  Schools did not progress through the 1st Stage of PBIS on the same schedule.
Restorative Justice Intervention Readiness Teachers (scale 1-5)
Restorative Justice “Buy In”
Teachers (scale 1-10)
Thank You!

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