BEYOND GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION:
STUDENT SAFETY IN TODAY'S SCHOOLS

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO BALANCING SCHOOL SECURITY AND CLIMATE

Every school has the opportunity to use both physical and psychological security measures to achieve the highest level of student safety. USC Rossier professor Ron Avi Astor recommends schools let the following actions guide them when deciding how to balance physical security, student safety and positive learning environments.

INVOLVE STUDENTS

START WITH THE COMMUNITY

Survey students about their experiences and concerns — then follow through. Use the data you collect to create a specific response to the problems.

PROVIDE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

There are student leaders in every middle and high school ready to create positive change. Give them the chance to make a difference — providing meaningful ways to involve them benefits everyone.

BE SPECIFIC

UNDERSTAND YOUR SCHOOL

Security should reflect each unique community's needs at a specific point in time. From problems in hallways to weapons on campus, address each school individually and reevaluate decisions over time.

KEEP IT CENTRAL

Safety policies are like a school's air conditioning system — the more centrally located, the more powerful the impact. Students learn what and who has influence, and anything focused on the outside of that system won't have as much staying power.

TAKE ACTION

SUPPORT THE FACULTY

Districts should first ensure their counseling departments are well staffed and funded. School counselors are trained experts in improving the school climate that helps keep students safe.

BALANCE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT YOU WANT

Too much physical security can make students feel less safe. Psychological security measures like relationship building, discipline strategies and suicide risk assessment can improve student safety while keeping positive school climate intact.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Indicators of School Crime and Safety
U.S. Department of Education

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

School Climate Resource Guide
Edutopia

School Safety and Crisis Response Guide
National Association of School Psychologists

School Violence in Context: Culture, Neighborhood, Family, School, and Gender
by Ron Avi Astor and Rami