

# Safety Initiative: 2006-07

Steven Wolfson, J.D., Ph.D.  
Rebecca Dyer

EA07-179-3

## At-a-Glance

The Safety Initiative is a districtwide effort adopted in 2004-2005 designed to promote a safe and civil environment at all school campuses. Its objectives include improving safety and security, deterring crime and misbehavior, and providing an environment conducive to learning. Areas of concentration are both on and off campus, including classrooms, cafeterias, hallways and buses. The initiative involves more than 20 different programs and strategies, affecting nearly all students and district personnel. The program runs through academic year 2008-2009. This evaluation covers four aspects of the program during 2006-2007.

### Program Implementation

Three programs aimed at violence prevention and intervention the district is using are Foundations, CHAMPs, and START on Time.

Foundations is a research-based program conceived by Teaching Strategies, Inc. of Oregon implemented in 48 secondary schools. It focuses on improving school safety and civility by offering strategies on how to improve behavior and discipline. It is data driven, and participants include school staff, students, and their families. At the school level, the goal is to maintain a safe and civil environment in common areas, such as hallways, cafeterias, playgrounds, and athletic fields. In the classroom, equal and consistent behavior expectations and consequences for violations are encouraged. For individual students, there are assurances that no one is left behind; there are consistent policies for addressing students with chronic behavioral issues; and that there is coordination among all available agencies and resources.

Consultants from Teaching Strategies, Inc. trained district staff. Additional training was conducted by the Dallas ISD Alternative Discipline office. Foundations coaches were recruited from Psychological and Social Services, Alternative Discipline, and Safe and Civil Schools departments. Coaches assist administrators and teachers in collaborating to develop and implement a practical and proactive plan.

This year, new requirements included a written safety plan for each school. Campus administrators, counselors, security personnel and teachers attended a full day workshop in which they formulated a written disciplinary plan for schools, with assistance from the

Safe and Civil Schools department. The plan established behavioral expectations, how to teach and sustain those expectations, how to address student misbehavior, and how to collect data on school safety and civility. A Foundations Leadership Team was formed to meet monthly to discuss guidance initiatives that were working in their schools.

CHAMPs, the classroom management program of Safe and Civil Schools, stands for Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, and Participation. It guides teachers on how to improve classroom management, teach responsibility, and structure the classroom environment to promote responsible behavior. Implemented by the district in 2004-2005, the goal was to enroll 74 elementary and secondary schools, training 800 teachers. As of 2006-2007, this goal has been met.

START on Time is an acronym for Safe Hallway Transitions and Reducing Tardiness in secondary schools. The entire staff works together to increase the level of coordinated hallway supervision and reduce tardiness. The program offers methods for teachers and campus administrators to reduce persistent tardiness and the classroom disruption it causes.

Reported criminal offenses at each school have been examined.

### Results

Data were compiled on raw number of criminal offenses occurring at all Dallas ISD schools during 2006-2007. There are four escalating levels of criminal offenses at school:

- 1) First level – Reporting to principal not required
- 2) Discretionary – Reporting to principal may be required
- 3) Mandatory – Reporting to principal is required
- 4) Expellable – Expulsion mandatory

Eleven schools reported zero first level offenses. Skyline reported the most first level offenses at 2,863. J.L. Long had the most discretionary reportable offenses with 623. Seven schools had no discretionary offenses.

For mandatory offenses, 94 schools (elementary level except for seven secondary) had zero. Skyline reported 79.

Almost all schools experienced no expellable offenses. The maximum was 115 at Alternative Center East.

A number of variables, however, affect these counts, such as reporting diligence, campus size, and variance. Some schools may be, and probably are, more diligent than others in reporting offenses. This might be especially true for minor offenses, such as first level or discretionary offenses. Nevertheless, most schools probably are diligent in reporting major infractions, such as mandatory and expellable offenses, which are certainly the most important levels of interest. Campus size, which would tend to increase or decrease the absolute value (but not necessarily the percentage) of offenses likely, is another variable that enters into the equation. It stands to reason that a large campus like Skyline is going to be more prone to criminal offenses than a small one like Irma Rangel simply due to the larger student population.

The majority of tardies occur during first period (221,893 total), more than two to one greater than the next highest number – fourth period with 97,459. Students have a hard time getting to class in the morning. Reasons are speculative, but no doubt range from oversleeping to transportation issues. At campuses with security, backpack inspection and metal detectors, a bottleneck may be encountered at entry.

### Summary

The mission of Dallas ISD to educate its students so they graduate ready to enter college and the workforce. Safe and secure campuses is a prerequisite to that mission. At present, seven Dallas ISD schools – Jefferson, White, North Dallas, Skyline, Cary, Marsh, and Rusk – are statistically significantly higher in expellable offenses than other Dallas ISD schools. Three – Jefferson, North Dallas, and Cary – are extremely statistically significantly higher in expellable offenses than other Dallas ISD schools. Excluding the Alternative schools, and counting Irma Rangel (both a middle and high school) only once, leaves 70 Dallas ISD middle and high school campuses. Thus, seven out of seventy campuses with such a high rate of expellable offenses is 10 percent of the entire universe of middle and high school campuses. Of those seven, all are Foundations schools. Florence Middle, not a Foundations school, should be added to the program, since it experienced a very high rate of total offenses during 2006-2007.

It is recommended that a more thorough, in-depth study be conducted on underlying reasons for the high rate of criminal offenses in Dallas ISD schools. Until those reasons can be isolated and examined, they will continue to defy intervention. Until those reasons can

be addressed, the criminal offense rate in Dallas ISD schools likely will persist, undermining the mission of the district to graduate its students ready for college and the workforce.

For more information, see EA07-179-3, available at [www.dallasisd.org/inside\\_disd/depts/evalacct/](http://www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/), or contact <Steven Wolfson> at 972-925-6427.