

MISSOURI SAFE SCHOOLS

Newsletter of the Missouri Center for Safe Schools

November 2003

FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .

Is school violence declining? Recently, I posed that question to approximately two hundred high school students attending a youth conference at the Lake of the Ozarks.

Almost unanimously the students responded; No! Actually, according to a government report that reflects incidents from 1995 to 2001, school crime is on the decline. Are the students out of touch or has the media influenced their perceptions?

The public perceives schools to be less safe now than in the past. In spite of all the hard work of school officials and school safety personnel to create a safer environment in our schools over the past few years, schools are still viewed as unsafe.

As a case in point, refer to the government report cited earlier. A national news agency reported the fact that school violence was declining in one sentence, yet went on to state we are experiencing a new spike in violence this school year, elaborating that there have been 20 violent school-related deaths since the start of the school year, representing an increase over the previous two years. Their report is misleading. While 20 violent deaths is indeed disturbing, most of these incidents did not occur on school grounds or at school events, but happened off school premises in the community. The way it was reported distorted the picture.

Therein lies part of the challenge we face as school officials. We must come up with better ways to get all the facts and

present them with accuracy to the public. Perhaps we can work more closely with the media and become more diligent in providing valid school safety data to the public. What are your opinions on this issue? Send your thoughts to berryg@umkc.edu.

Glenn Berry

GET THIS NEWSLETTER QUICKER

We are now distributing the *Missouri Safe Schools* newsletter electronically. When the newsletter is finalized, we first distribute it via e-mail, then we send a copy out for duplication and mailing. Therefore, the e-mail will reach you around 2 weeks faster than the hardcopy. By providing us your e-mail address for electronic receipt of the newsletter, you receive the newsletter quicker, we save paper, and we eliminate the duplication and postage expense. We will continue to mail a hardcopy to each superintendent. For all others, we would like to include you on our electronic distribution list. Please send your e-mail address to thompsonrs@umkc.edu using the subject line: Electronic Newsletter Distribution.

If you are a District Safety Coordinator and you have already provided us your e-mail address, disregard this notice. We will include our Safety Coordinator distribution list with other addressees when we send out the newsletter on line.

FROM SUSAN . . .

Safe School Grant recipients are receiving extra funding for the 03-04 school year. In light of state and district budget uncertainties, the Department allocated more funds to existing Safe Schools programs rather than award new, first-year grants for FY 03-04. To receive the additional funding, the district needed to submit a revised budget. The result of this decision provided just over \$430,000 to second-year Safe Schools grants. Recipient districts received a 40% increase of their original approved grant amounts. The increase raised the level of state support from 50% to 70% for most districts. For third-year recipients, \$545,000 was distributed resulting in a 70% increase of original approved grant amounts. The increase raised the level of state support from 25% to 42.5% for most districts.

Decisions about offering new first year grants and support for existing grants in the coming year will be made as information about appropriation support is clearer.

Susan Cole, Coordinator
State Programs
DESE

SAFETY COORDINATOR TRAINING

Don't forget to register for Safety Coordinator Training through the Regional Professional Development Centers. Regional trainings provided by the Missouri Center for Safe Schools are scheduled as follows:

Warrensburg RPDC (800-762-4146) Nov 4
Kirksville RPDC (660-785-4220) Nov 7
Rolla RPDC (800-667-0665) Nov 11
Southeast RPDC (800-401-6680) Nov 12
SW Center for Ed. Excellence, Webb City
(417-673-7078) Nov 18
Kansas City RPDC (800-555-9048) Nov 20
Maryville RPDC (800-663-3348) Dec 9
Columbia RPDC (800-214-2753) Jan 22
St. Louis RPDC (800-835-8282) Feb 5
(advanced training only at St. Louis)

Basic Safety Coordinated Training (3.5 hours) will be presented in the morning. Advanced Safety Coordinator Training (3 hours) will be presented in the afternoon.

All District Safety Coordinators are encouraged to complete the 3.5 hour basic course at least one time. The material is updated continuously and it may be beneficial to attend this course every other year. The material presented includes:

- Role of the Safety Coordinator
- The components of a comprehensive school safety program (*Safety Review Checklist*)
- Missouri Safe Schools Act
- Violence prevention and the *Missouri Violence Prevention Curriculum Framework*

The 3 hour advanced course addresses different topics from year to year. Some of the information addressed in the advanced course will be rolled into the basic course for subsequent years. Safety Coordinators should attend the advanced course each year. During school year 2003-2004 the material presented as part of the advanced course will include:

- Safety Review Checklist Update
- Emergency Management Planning (including bomb threat procedures, media interface, etc.)

- Bullying Prevention
- Science Lab Safety Issues

EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN DISCRETIONARY GRANTS (CFDA #84.184E)

On September 30 Senator Kit Bond announced that three school districts were awarded 18-month grants by the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of improving emergency management planning and response. The districts and the amount of each award are:

- Ferguson Florissant School District, \$250,00
- Kansas City #33, \$468,366
- St. Joseph School District, \$263,453

The Emergency Response and Crisis Management Program provides local educational agencies with funds to improve and strengthen emergency response and crisis management plans, including training school personnel, students and parents in emergency response procedures and coordinating with local government, law enforcement, public safety, health, and mental health agencies. Awardees will help ensure the safety of their students by working with staff, students, parents and community partners to mitigate and prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from crises.

More information about the grant is available at www.ed.gov/emergencyplan. This grant may be made available next year. Start assembling your application now.

SCIENCE LAB SAFETY

The Missouri Center for Safe Schools is collecting data in order to apply for grant money for the purpose of helping school districts properly dispose of excess and expired chemicals and organic material located in science laboratories or storage areas. Only those schools that submit data by December 20th will be included in the grant application that is prepared. The Center hopes to find grant funding that will allow for the identified materials to be properly transferred or disposed of at no cost to participating school districts. There is no assurance that the proposed grant will receive funding.

If you believe that your schools have excess or expired chemicals/organic material, it would be to your advantage to complete the application form (available at <http://www.umkc.edu/safe-school>) and submit it to the Missouri Center for Safe Schools (fax number and address on the form) not late than December 20, 2003. Each participating school should complete a separate form.

SAFE SCHOOLS SYMPOSIUM

The turnout was small for this year's Safe Schools Symposium conducted at the Lenoir Center in Columbia on Thursday, September 25th. We knew it would be difficult for educators to get away from school with the budget constraints and staffing challenges all districts are facing. The 30 who attended generated some

interesting discussions. We learned from this experience that the Symposium can be a success regardless of the number attending. Thanks to our presenters for a job well done.

As in the past, the Symposium focused on violence prevention and alternative education. This year we heard presentations on DESE programs, regional professional development centers and sponsored resources (CHARACTER*plus*, Positive Behavior Supports, and the National Guard Counterdrug Task Force), and the alternative education associations (Alternative School Network Association and the Missouri Association of Alternative Education).

We are tentatively scheduled with the Lenoir Center in Columbia for our next Symposium on Thursday, September 23, 2004.

SCHOOL SAFETY SUMMIT

Around 80 people turned out for the School Safety Summit in Springfield on October 15th. Congratulations to Southwest Regional Professional Development Center, Dennis Lewis, Judy Brunner, and others who collaborated to organize the summit.

MARK WHITE SELECTED TO SERVE ON THE NPS NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Donna Thompson, Director of the National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS), has selected Lee's Summit R-7 School District employee Mark White to

serve on their National Advisory Board. Mr. White is the Environmental / Risk Manager for the District and is the facilitator of the Playground Safety Initiative (PSI) team. The success of this team to reduce serious accidents on the seventeen District playgrounds, while improving accessibility, continues to receive national attention by playground equipment manufacturers and safety experts. Mr. White attended the NPPS Playground Safety School in August of 2000 and completed the S.A.F.E. Certification program. He also holds a professional designation through the National Playground Safety Institute (NRPA) as a Certified Playground Safety Inspector. Congratulations Mark.

SAFETY TRAINING

An important aspect of a comprehensive school safety program is staff development. Employee performance expectations regarding safety need to be specified in the faculty and staff handbooks and included in new employee indoctrinations. All employees should receive safety updates and refreshers each year.

Our computer networks allow us to provide safety staff development in a more efficient manner. Richard Jones, Director of Maintenance, at Nixa R-II School District has developed a "Maintenance and Safety Information" page on the district's Intra Net. The information contained on the page includes:

- Maintenance Safety Training
- Fire Extinguisher Training
- Mercury Cleanup Procedures
- Spill Cleanup Prevention and Response
- Asbestos Parent Notification Letter
- Asbestos Employee Awareness

Asbestos Floor Plans (each building)
Welding Safety
Material Safety Data Sheets

Richard Jones says that the Intra Net is a good supplement, not a replacement, for formal safety training. For more information, contact him at rjones@mail.nixa.k12.mo.us.

Dr. Russ Thompson, Associate Director of the Missouri Center for Safe Schools, is the newsletter editor. If you would like to submit an article for a future *Missouri Safe Schools Newsletter*, please send him your submission by e-mail to thompsonrs@umkc.edu or mail it to:

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Check out the web page for the Missouri Center for Safe Schools at <http://www.umkc.edu/safe-school> and call us at our offices in the School of Education, University of Missouri-Kansas City, (816) 235-5656.