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**The University of Southern Mississippi**

**THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SCHOOL SAFETY**

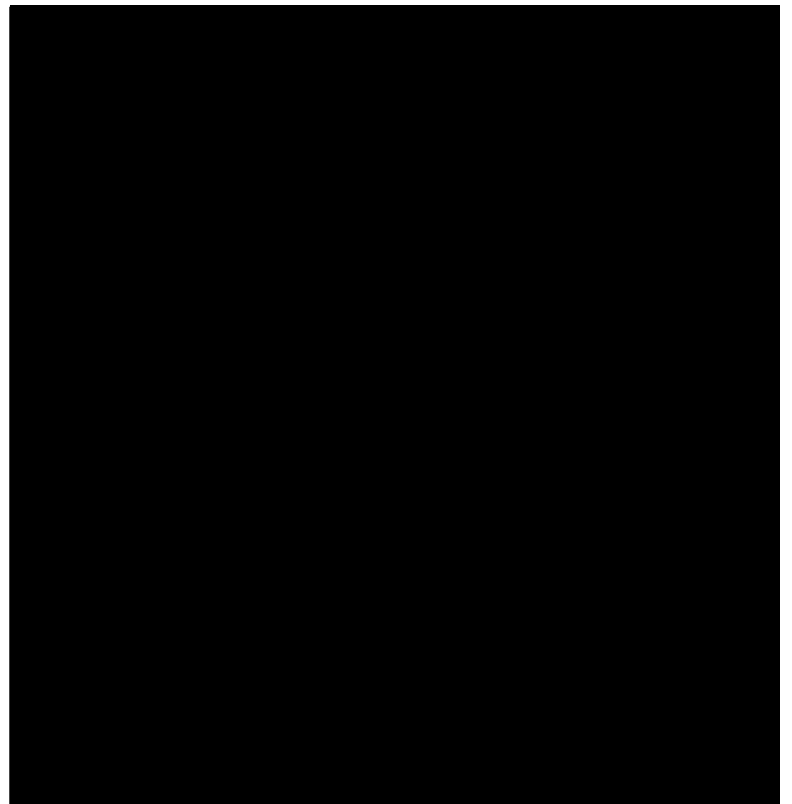
**by**

**Leslie Lee Brown**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Approved:**



**August 2008**

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The University of Southern Mississippi

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SCHOOL SAFETY

by

Leslie Lee Brown

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2008

## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SCHOOL SAFETY

by Leslie Lee Brown

August 2008

This study examined teachers' perceptions of their abilities to effectively respond to crises on their school campuses. Teachers were surveyed in numerous southeastern states in contrasting demographic areas. Much of the literature addressed acts of violence, natural disasters, and threats of terrorism in schools. Past literature designates urban areas as places where violence has been a more prevalent element of everyday life. Current evidence shows that school shootings and natural disasters can occur anywhere. This shows that planning, practicing, and preparing for crises events are imperative no matter the demographic area in which a school is located. However, there is a dearth of literature on teachers' perceptions of their abilities to respond to a crisis.

This lack of literature on teachers' perceptions prompted the researcher to investigate the topic. The researcher designed a survey instrument "Teachers in a Crisis Preparedness Survey" that was distributed to 1,000 educators. Participants responded anonymously to survey items related to their years of service in the field and position (high school/elementary). Furthermore, participants were queried about the consistency of practice drills, established emergency procedures/plans, and confidence in their administrators' ability to capably lead in a crisis.

Examination of the data showed that teachers report they practice drills in average frequency, with the exception of fire drills which were reported to be practiced in higher frequencies. However, teachers reported they do not feel prepared. Overall, teachers do not believe they are well trained to handle a crisis situation at their schools whether their schools are in urban or rural areas.

Further examination of the data showed that teachers had more confidence in their principal's ability to respond to a crisis than in their own abilities. However, the teachers didn't have a strong perception of their principal's ability. This indicates that more steps need to be taken to establish safety protocols and consistently practice procedures for all types of crises. This will enhance teachers' confidence in their ability to respond when a crisis arises.

The ultimate goal of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to manage crises. This research lays the foundation for future studies that examine this topic.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents, Steve Ray and Alice Faye Brown.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer expresses appreciation to all those who extended encouragement and assistance. The writer expresses the deepest appreciation to Angela Mitchell Shankles for editing this work before it was presented to members of the doctoral committee: Dr. Mike Ward, Dr. J.T. Johnson, Dr. Wanda Maulding, and Dr. David Lee. The writer is especially grateful to Dr. Mike Ward, chair of the committee, who is respected for his diligent work ethic, wisdom, and ethical character. I would like to thank Dr. Mike Ward for his enormous patience and for advising me during all phases of this dissertation, during my coursework, and through job related crises. Thank you for being available when the university was closed, your door was always open. Thanks is extended to Dr. J.T. Johnson for his statistical expertise. The writer would particularly like to thank Dr. Wanda Maulding. Had it not been for her keen insight, the writer is convinced that she would not be where she is today in this educational program.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine one of the most challenging problems facing school administrators in contemporary society, school safety. The need for comprehensive school safety plans was brought to the forefront in the early 1990s as a result of widely publicized acts of school violence (Small, 1995). School safety continues to be a prominent issue because of additional threats: acts of terrorism and natural disasters. The 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act* mandates that schools have crisis management plans that stipulate how schools will keep their campuses safe (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006). Teachers have an integral role in school safety because they are charged with the responsibility of helping students; teachers are in charge of classrooms full of students when an act of violence, terror, or natural disaster occurs. After Columbine, Katrina, and 9/11 “it seems imperative that they (teachers) be properly trained and confident in their ability to act, should the need arise” (Graveline, 2003, p. 68). However, there is a dearth of literature regarding teacher’s perceptions of self-efficacy to deal with crises.

#### Statement of the Problem

Schools are vulnerable to multiple kinds of threats to safety including violence, terrorism, and natural disaster. School shootings are widely publicized examples of school safety threats. Littleton, Springfield, West Paducah, Red Lake, Pearl, Blacksburg, Paradise and Jonesboro are all infamous locales where school shootings occurred. Evidence from prior school shootings shows that

although law enforcement officers respond quickly to the campus where the shooting is occurring, they are not the ones who actually stop the violent acts. It is school personnel who typically put an end to the shooting; in some cases, students are the ones responsible for stopping the violence (Secret Service & Department of Education, 1999). This evidence highlights the need for principals and teachers to be prepared for acts of violence on school campuses. In order to examine teacher's feelings of preparedness, an overarching concept of teacher's perceptions should be stated. This was difficult due to the lack of research "that focuses on the perceptions of teachers of their ability to intervene in a school crisis" (Graveline, 2003, p. 68). Often research is done on teacher self-efficacy linked to instruction and/or student performance (Cosh, 2000; Tompson & Dass, 2000). Higher teaching efficacy is correlated to more "demanding instructional techniques, implementation of innovative programs, more humanistic classroom management styles, and building school consensus" (Graveline, 2003, p. 65). These correlations illustrate how teacher self-efficacy needs to be investigated in regards to school safety preparedness. In 2003, Graveline wrote

A 24-month survey of the literature, found only two studies relating to teacher intervention in student crises. One of these investigations discussed only students, teachers' and administrators' perceptions of violence. However, the survey did include two questions, one for students, the other addressing teachers, relating to the probability that a teacher would intervene in a student crisis (Schubarth, 2000). The second study focused on teachers' rationale of the circumstances, both

environmental and emotional, under which they might intervene in a student crisis (Behre et al., 2001). Both of these studies utilized primarily quantitative methodologies. A single ethnographic study was found; however, the purpose of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of the prevalence of various types of violence and to explore the types of relationships that exist between perpetrators and victims of violence (Lockwood, 1997) (p. 68).

In addition to the above studies, Pfefferbaum (2004) surveyed teachers recently on their perceptions of crises preparedness before and after 9/11 in one New York City school. The study revealed that teacher's perceptions of ability to cope decreased significantly. It is important to recognize the precarious position of teachers and their safety needs because research indicates there is no location immune from violence.

Some research says school violence is more likely to occur on campuses located in high-crime areas. For decades, violence has been a common element of everyday life in urban areas (Bennett-Johnson, 2004). In the article "*Perceptions of violence: the view of teachers who left urban schools*" the authors found that teachers "remembered their urban schools as places of violence" (Smith & Smith, 2006, p. 37). Other evidence shows that school shootings can happen anywhere; suburban and rural areas are now enmeshed in the threat of school violence. Jeff Weise killed 7 people at Red Lake High School, a rural school that has a student enrollment of 355 (Borja, 2005). Columbine High School was in a suburban area.

William Murphy, a former vice-principal in California, had titanium plates inserted into his head after being attacked by a fan at a basketball game. In an interview he stated, "I never expected to be a victim of anything, I guess it goes with the territory" (Tonn, 2005, p. 2). A fifteen-year-old student killed an assistant principal and wounded two other administrators at Campbell County High, a large school with a 1,400 student enrollment (Tonn, 2005). Linda Gray, former director of news and public affairs and assistant vice president of the University of Florida says, "I always tell people, 'You will have a crisis'" (Kennedy, 1999, p. 42). In spite of the assertion that a school crisis is inevitable, many school personnel appear to be in denial regarding the prospect of threats. Kenneth Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, was conducting a violence prevention training session when an administrator commented, "I'm not worried about having a crisis plan in my school – I have it all here" (Tonn, 2005, p. 3). The administrator made this comment as he pointed to his head.

Fortunately, many schools are not in denial and are taking action. School officials in Wayne Township, Indianapolis, set up an anonymous tip-line for students who need to report threats of violence (Marek & Kass, 2005). Anchorage public schools began training children in conflict resolution and peer mediation in grade three. West Orange School District in New Jersey put troublemakers in charge as a tactic to encourage the students to be positive leaders. Heartwood Institute's Ethics Program was used for eight years in East Hills Elementary School in Pittsburg. During this time, students learned about

honesty and loyalty through storytelling which promotes positive thinking patterns in young children (Pascopella, 2004).

Leaders in school systems across the country are emerging from the false, pervasive mindset of immunity from violence to embrace techniques for awareness of and courses of action for school violence and disaster. Hurricane Katrina and the terrorist attacks in 2001 jolted society's apathy toward school safety. School officials transitioned into a proactive approach to examine these events, particularly the terrorist attacks, to determine if there were warning signs of these events' likelihood. According to Toppo (2003), there were strong indications of the likelihood of violent attacks on American soil prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. While school officials were very concerned about potential terrorist attacks in the immediate years after 9/11, their concern seems to have abated now that six years have passed (Public Agency Training Council, 2007). According to Adams and Kritsonis (2006), school personnel should not focus on whether a school safety crisis may occur but when. "Failure to consider the possibility of a crisis event occurring does not exempt anyone from the possibility of a crisis occurring on their campuses" (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 2).

Natural disasters threaten school safety; therefore, schools need to address natural disasters in their school safety plans. On March 1, 2007, a tornado struck Enterprise High School in Enterprise, AL, killing 8 and injuring dozens ("Tornado Destroys – Enterprise Rebuilds," 2007). In 1992, Hurricane Andrew caused 150 million dollars in damages to 270 buildings in Dade County,



FL Public School district (Champion, 1993). In December 2004, a tsunami in the Indian Ocean claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Schools and lives were destroyed, and the effects of the damages are lasting. The effects of Hurricane Katrina continue to be felt throughout schools and communities in the Gulf Coast; Hurricane Katrina was one of the deadliest and costliest storms in U.S. History (Rubelen, 2005). Natural disasters prove time and time again that emergency plans need to be in place prior to the crisis. Emergency plans should address the roles and responsibilities of administrators, teachers, students, and their parents. According to Cookson and Peter (2005), the potential of natural disasters and their effects should be discussed openly in the classroom. Students need to feel safe in their school environments; therefore, open dialogue reaffirms that students are under the leadership of teachers and administrators who are capable of responding to a disaster.

The affirmation of safety for students stems from the consistent effort of administrators and teachers to create and implement a school crisis plan that is routinely practiced. According to Gallagher, Bagin, and Moore, (2005) a crisis plan is essential for a school to effectively respond when an immediate crisis occurs. After the Gainesville murders, where five students were slain at school, Linda Gray developed a detailed crisis communication plan. Kennedy (1999) points out that the new school safety plan should incorporate detailed step-by-step procedures. The hurricanes of 2005 revealed both the inadequacies of Gulf Coast emergency preparation and the need for more comprehensive school crisis plans. The plan should be developed by a joint committee of community

services, parents, teachers, students, and staff (Bennett-Johnson, 2004). The plan should encompass prevention strategies and emergency measures to plan, prepare, and practice for the worst possible incidents of violence, terrorism, and natural disaster. The plan needs to be communicated, and frequent drills must occur for procedural effectiveness (Heck, 2001; International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1999; "Openness makes schools", 1992; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2006).

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study will address the following research questions:

1. Do teachers have knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools?
2. Are emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness?
3. Is the level of regularity in practice of emergency response related to teachers' personal assessments of capably responding to a crisis?
4. Do teachers believe that they are adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis?
5. What are teachers' perceptions of their principals' ability to respond to crises?
6. What are teachers' perceptions of their principals as leaders who consider school crises as a viable event on their campus?
7. Is there a difference between teachers' perceptions of principal's attitude toward the viability of crisis events depending upon their schools' location in rural vs. urban areas and the safety of the school?

The research hypotheses are as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>: No significant difference will be found between teachers' perceptions of their ability to handle a crisis and teachers' perceptions of their principal's ability to respond to a crisis.
- H<sub>2</sub>: No significant difference will be found between urban and rural school districts teachers' perceptions concerning their ability to handle a crisis.
- H<sub>3</sub>: No significant relationship will be found between the degree to which emergency response drills are routinely practiced and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy related to handling crises.

#### Definition of Terms

Terms used in this study were as follows:

Crisis Management: actions taken by teacher or other staff member in conjunction with assuming a major leadership role in a school crisis.

Crisis training: training of educators to respond in the event of a crisis. Training may include lecture, handouts, role-playing, and simulations.

Perceived self-efficacy: "person's judgment of how well he or she can perform the necessary sequence of actions to attain the intended goal" (Graveline, 2003, p. 10).

Safe school: "A safe school is one in which the total school climate allows students, teachers, administrators, staff, and visitors to interact in a positive, non-threatening manner that reflects the educational mission of the school while fostering positive relationships and personal growth" (Bucher & Manning, 2005, p. 56). In a safe school, student misbehavior is

disciplined in a consistent manner, and the discipline measures are considered fair. Students also understand the administrators' and teachers' expectations of their behavior. "A safe school is a place where the business of education can be conducted in a welcoming environment free of intimidation, violence, and fear. Such a setting provides an educational climate that fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for every child. It is a place free of bullying where behavior expectations are clearly communicated, consistently enforced, and fairly applied" (Bucher & Manning, 2005, p. 57).

School crisis plan: a plan of action developed by staff, community, students, and service personnel to be followed in a crisis that threatens the school or its population.

School violence: "Physical harm (hitting, pushing, throwing objects at, or damaging property of the employee), or threats of such harm" (Kondrasuk, Greene, Waggoner, Edwards & Nayak- Rhodes, 2005, p. 639). "Pitcher and Poland (1992) interpret a crisis as an important and seemingly unsolvable problem with which those involved feel unable to cope" (Young, Poland & Griffin, 1996, p. 147).

Teacher training program: programs teachers attend at a university to gain professional skills before he/she becomes a teacher.

### Delimitations

The study was conducted with the following limitations imposed by the researcher:

1. The study was delimited to teachers' perceptions, which may or may not coincide with the perceptions of others.
2. The results were limited to teachers from the southeastern United States.

### Assumptions

The assumptions made in the implementation of this study are as follows:

1. The researcher assumed that the subjects answered the questions honestly.
2. The researcher assumed that the subjects comprehend the questionnaire.
3. The researcher assumed that the perceptions of study participants reflect those of their peers in southeastern states.

### Justification

According to Paul Mendofik, Public Agency Training Council, (2007) more than 300 deaths caused by violence occurred on school campuses in the last four years. No deaths occurred on school campuses due to fire. Mendofik states that this is due to mandated fire drills. It is imperative that schools not only have crisis plans in place but that the plans are also known to and routinely practiced by all staff and students. Since teachers spend the most time with students (Hardin & Harris, 2000; Hull, 2000; & National Education Association, 2001), it seems important that teachers be properly trained and feel confident in their abilities to respond in a crisis situation (Graveline, 2003). The researcher found

two studies that investigated teachers' perceptions of their ability to react in a school crisis. One was a small-scale qualitative study by Graveline. In 2003 Graveline wrote "There have even been many investigations of students', teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the prevalence, type and causes of school violence, yet to date there has been no investigation of teachers' perceptions of their ability to execute intervention strategies (Astor & Behre, 1997, 1998, Behre et al., 2001; Lockwood, 1997, Pietrzak et al., 1998; Schubarth, 2000)" (p. 69). The other was a study conducted in one New York school after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The researcher found that after the attacks teacher's self-efficacy to handle crises had decreased (Pfefferbaum, Fairbrother, Brandt, Robertson, Gurwitch, Stuber, & Pfefferbaum, 2004). There is also a dearth of literature on teachers' perceptions of their principal ability to handle crises; however, research is available on general principal effectiveness (Williams, 2000). This study helped school officials observe the techniques that make teachers feel capable of managing crises. According to Trump (1999), "On a day-to-day basis, schools will always have initiatives that seem more pressing, but on the day that violence strikes everything else will be completely inconsequential" (p. 15).

### Summary

In light of natural disasters, terrorism, school shootings, and violence occurring annually, school safety continues to be a timely topic. Basically, it is unethical for administrators and school personnel to be unprepared for crises. Crises can occur on any campus regardless of school size or location. Natural

disasters, terrorist attacks, and school shootings provide extensive evidence that emergency plans and training should be in place before the crises occurs. This study explored teachers' knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools, teachers' perceived self-efficacy, and teachers' perceptions of their principals' ability to respond to crises. This study was conducted in light of the fact that so little literature exists on such a topic which has so many implication for the education community.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature related to school safety, teachers' perceptions, and variables related to school safety. The chapter opens with a theoretical framework and defines the phenomenon of school safety and teachers' perceptions. The topic of school violence is examined in detail because this is usually the first thing construct one associates with school safety.

The review of literature addresses natural disasters, terrorism, and the principal's influences in shaping schools' negative or positive safety climate. Effective and ineffective principal responses to emergencies are noted, along with a section on the importance of a positive school climate. The literature review also examines the importance of crises management and planning. Prevention, bullying, safety plans, and training are all highlighted at the end of chapter two.

Schools have become increasingly vulnerable to numerous threats to safety. At the same time, the nation has demanded reform in public education. Administrators and teachers are more accountable than ever for providing every child with a quality education. Some have questioned whether a quality education can exist in an environment where there are multiple threats to the personal safety of students and teachers.

School shootings typically come to mind when the term school safety is mentioned. "School safety is a whole lot more than someone bringing a gun to



school” (Hurst, 2005, p. 13). Research shows that school shootings comprise only a small part of the overall picture of school safety. The nation needs to be made aware of all the kinds of incidents categorized under the term “safety.” Studies conducted by the federal government show that a large majority of criminal and victimization incidents that occur at school do not involve physical violence. According to a report by the Justice Policy Institute published in 2000, school-age children have an estimated one-in-two million chance of being killed by someone or dying in an accident while at school (Hurst, 2005).

Rintoul (1998) gave a very useful perspective on why a broader view point of school violence must be assimilated.

Understanding that violence in schools merely reflects the violence of larger society is scarcely comforting to the teachers, administrators, parents, and students who traditionally have regarded school as a haven of safety. Moreover, it is curious that schools appear to be held to a higher standard than the larger society, in that there is a consensus among the community at large that schools should be free from violence even though the rest of society is not. (p. 3)

### Theoretical Framework

This research is connected to several theories in the field of psychology. The first theory is Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. One of the most basic needs is the assurance of safety; students need to feel safe in their classrooms. According to Maslow’s theory, deficiencies in fulfillment of other needs will occur if the physiological and safety needs of an individual are not met first (Huitt,

2004). Teachers and students perform at optimum levels when their safety and other needs are fulfilled. The top of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs deals with self-actualization and transcendence. This research focuses on teachers' perceptions. Teachers usually have progressed through the first tiers of Maslow's pyramid, and they are striving for, or have reached, self-actualization as adults working at the higher ends of Maslow's scale. One way that teachers can achieve self-actualization is through helping students reach their potential. Teachers can also act morally by developing sound safety plans, teaching lessons on bullying and drug prevention, getting assistance for emotional disturbed students in their areas of need, and focusing on helping others at their schools. The second theory is that of Alderfer (1972); his theory is similar to Maslow's. Again, students and teachers need to feel connectedness and security (which is the first stage in Alderfer's theory) in order to excel in school. Adams and Kritsonis (2006) pointed out "there are at least two major purposes to schooling. These purposes include facilitating the development of both cognitive/academic and personal/social skills. Crisis situations have the ability to interfere with both of these goals" (p.2). The third theory is Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. "Self-efficacy is synonymous with an individual's belief that he/she is competent and can succeed in a particular task...Bandura's theory of self-efficacy states that self-efficacy is fundamental to competent performance"(Stolz, 1999). Bandura's theory also presents verbal persuasion as a tool. Principals can utilize verbal persuasion to strengthen a teacher's self-efficacy. Stolz, 1999 experiment reinforces that verbal persuasion can increase

or decrease one's confidence, therefore, increasing or decreasing one's performance.

The last theory is the Cognitive Developmental Domain Theory (CDD). CDD is an important theory to examine in relation to school safety. Teachers' perceptions are examined in this research and the different domains of CDD explore why one may make a particular judgment. The above theories are covered more extensively in the following paragraphs.

Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" is illustrated in a pyramid of human needs; the lowest tier includes the foundational needs. The foundational tier encompasses safety needs and physiological needs. The safety requirements include feeling safe, secure, and free from danger. The physiological needs call for the satisfaction of hunger, thirst, and similar basic requirements. These rudimentary needs must be fulfilled in order for a person to progress to the second tier of the pyramid -- psychological needs. Psychological needs include issues of esteem and the desire to love and to feel loved. Psychological needs typically have to be met before a person achieves self-actualization. Self-actualization is the apex of Maslow's "Hierarchy," the desired point at which a person reaches his or her own unique potential. In order for students to be able to progress naturally and effectively through the steps outlined in the pyramid, the basic need of safety must be fulfilled (Newman & Newman, 2003). Teachers also function at optimum levels when their needs are fulfilled. Teachers' desire to help others is part of striving for self-actualization. Helping students in crises demonstrates self-actualization. Some teachers have gone so far as to give their

very lives in order to save their students during attacks on their campuses. Americans expect their schools to provide a safe, stable environment for all students, regardless of students' experiences in their homes or outside the school setting.

Alderfer's Hierarchy has three stages: existence, relatedness, and growth. All stages in his theory include introversion and extroversion descriptions. Stage one, existence, includes basic physiological, biological, connectedness, and security needs. Again, students and teachers need to feel security at school to learn effectively. Stage two, relatedness, includes personal identification with group, significant others, and esteem. Stage three, growth, includes self-actualization and the assisting of helping others to develop their competencies (Huitt, 2004). The overarching concept of this section is that teachers can reach for the apex of Alderfer's Theory by developing knowledge, positive attitudes, safety plans, and skills related to safety preparedness. Teachers can also develop their students' competencies in these areas and help to develop students' character by providing lessons on honesty, anti-bullying, peer mediation, and positive decision making. Again, the safety needs must be addressed first; a student will have difficulty learning in an unsafe environment or in a disaster zone where his/her basic needs are not being met.

In Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy there are four sources of self-efficacy. The first source is mastery of experiences. Mastery of experiences is the most effective way to build self-efficacy. The second way to build self-efficacy is through vicarious reinforcement. Seeing a social model similar to

one's self succeed at an activity will strengthen self-efficacy. Furthermore, seeing the failure of a model despite the model's high effort will decrease one's self-efficacy. The third way to build self-efficacy is by social persuasion. "People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise" (Bandura, 1994). People who are persuaded that they are lacking in ability avoid challenging activities. Principals can be the social persuasion catalyst who strengthens teacher's perceived self-efficacy. Principals are effective when they are successful efficacy builders.

Successful efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. In addition to raising people's beliefs in their capabilities, they structure situations for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail often. They measure success in terms of self improvement rather than by triumphs over others (Bandura, 1994, para 8).

The fourth way to strengthen self-efficacy is to combat people's stress reaction and decrease negative mood. "People also rely partly on their somatic and emotional states in judging their capabilities" (para 9).

Cognitive Developmental Domain Theory (CDD) has been used in the past to note how people feel about controversial issues like corporal punishment for example. The CDD theory states that "social thought is organized into moral, social and personal domains" (Behre, Astor, & Meyer, 2001, p. 133). The moral

domain focuses on physical and emotional harm when making judgments. The social domain focuses on norms created by society in reasoning and making judgments. The personal domain deals with issues of ones' personal interests, likes and dislikes.

When examining reasoning patterns, CCD researchers document the domain components of the situation. Components are specific aspects of the participant's response that correspond to the definition of each domain. If respondents refer both to rules and social consensus, their reasoning involves two social-conventional components. Similarly, if the respondents mention physical pain and rules, a moral component and social conventional component are present in their reasoning (Behre, Astor, & Meyer, 2001, p. 134).

Behre, Astor, and Meyer (2001) used this CDD theoretical framework when discussing teachers' reasoning about school violence. CDD theory is important to this study because the researcher is examining teachers' perceptions.

The above theoretical frameworks explain the importance of children feeling safe at school in order to develop socially and emotionally. It also explains that teachers must feel safe to perform tasks at optimum levels. It explores the top end of Maslow's and Alderfer's theories in regard to teachers' developmental and moral obligations. According to Bandura self-efficacy can be strengthened. Teachers should have a higher level of self-efficacy in performing task in a crisis if they have had training and practice drills. This focuses on teacher's development is the apex of Maslow's Alderfer's, and Bandura's

theories. Teachers and administrators are charged with the task of educating youth. To educate, one must create a safe environment in which students can learn. One of the main tasks in this endeavor is to develop a safe school climate. Teachers' perceptions should be addressed and safety should be explored to evaluate effective ways to promote a positive school climate.

### Defining the Phenomenon of School Safety

To examine the role of teachers in school safety, one should develop a composite outline of what is happening in the nation's schools. The landscape of the American school has changed dramatically in the last 40 years. The events that affected a school in the 1970s seem insignificant in comparison to the newspaper and television reports about the contemporary school environment. Today, administrators, teachers, and students are faced with tragic events such as abuse, assaults, homicides, death, suicide, terrorism, gang violence, weather-related disasters, and accidents. Stress, brought on by society's mobility, job loss, and divorce, is another component that affects America's students and school personnel. Pitcher and Poland define a crisis "as an important and seemingly unsolvable problem with which those involved feel unable to cope. It is the perception of the individual that defines a crisis – not the event itself" (Young, Poland & Griffin, 1996, p. 147).

School safety goes "beyond the cameras and metal detectors and lockdown drills, one of the most effective ways to prevent school violence lies with the people behind the desks: teachers" (Horner, 2006, p. 1). "A safe school is one in which the total school climate allows students, teachers, administrators,

staff, and visitors to interact in a positive, non-threatening manner that reflects the educational mission of the school while fostering positive relationships and personal growth” (Bucher & Manning, 2005, p. 56). Dan Corbett, director of education for PBS-Channel 8 in Duluth, Minnesota, and professor at the University of Minnesota stated, “A teacher has a major impact on determining that climate in the classroom, just like administrators have a major impact on determining the climate in the building” (Horner, 2006, p. 1). Teachers are on the front lines and should contribute to the development of safety plans and be involved in practice and execution of drills. Teacher self-efficacy concerning his or her ability to perform tasks in a crisis is vital. In a crisis, the goal is for teachers to complete the emergency tasks practiced without having to think about the task because it has become second nature. Providing teachers with ongoing intervention training by emergency preparedness drills and teacher in-services training helps the teachers feel more prepared and confident addressing crisis situations (Bandura, 1988).

#### School Violence Findings

For this overview of literature, findings on school violence are explored in the following order: demographic locations of school violence, increases in school violence, and under-reporting of violent incidents. Urban schools in poor areas have been traditionally and continue to be areas with high rates of violent incidents (Everett & Price, 1997; Lichtenstein, Schonfeld & Kline, 1994; National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). School violence is also increasing in rural and suburban areas (Furlong & Morrison, 2001; Pride Survey, 2007; Rintoul,



1998). Furthermore, some rural schools are seeing more rampage-type killings (Bowman, 2002). The overarching concept in this section is that all teachers in all schools should become diligent in preventing and preparing for school violence. One obstacle is that teachers perceive that rural areas are less likely to encounter violence, when compared with their urban counterparts (Rintoul, 1998). "The commonly held notion, however, that violence occurs only in our inner-city systems is a fallacy" (Graveline, 2003, p. 75). Teachers may perceive that safety needs are met in rural areas because of these misconceptions. Also, some perceive that people in rural areas have high moral development and a greater need to help others which leads to the focus of Maslow's and Alderfer's theories. Increases in school violence are evident. These increases have led to state and federal governments' push to decrease violence in schools. Teachers, parents, government officials, administrators, students, schools, and communities are concerned with the issue of school violence, and it is time to ask teachers how they feel about school safety preparedness. "It is crucial to determine the amount of knowledge teachers have regarding school violence and school safety in order to examine teacher self-efficacy to manage school crises" (Graveline, 2003, p. 75).

#### *Demographic Location of School Violence*

All schools, regardless of location or size, need to be prepared for emergencies or crises. Urban schools traditionally have been considered more likely candidates for acts of violence because of their location in metropolitan areas and their size (Lichtenstein, Schonfeld & Kline, 1994). Recent data on

school violence shows that rural schools are increasingly as likely to experience violence as their urban counterparts. In one study, the researcher found that rural teachers are unwilling to see that the gap is closing.

The lack of congruence between the idealized vision of the rural school and the recounted reality as it pertains to school violence could have serious consequences for school and community if, because of certain factors and conditions, teachers fail to consider seriously issues of violence in school (Rintoul, 1998, p. 13).

The schools in rural areas have been thought to be immune from violence because of low enrollment, family and personal relationships between school and community, ethics of honesty, hard working people, simple idyllic life image, and people's concern for the well being of their neighbors. Studies show that this image is somewhat accurate because rural areas have less crime than urban; however, rural violence is on the increase. An Alabama State Department Survey revealed that 9 students brought guns to one rural school campus which has a population of 270 students (Pride Survey, 2007). "It is unreasonable to presume that country living has been frozen in time when its urban neighbor has been subject to rapid change" (Rintoul, 1998, p. 4). Furlong and Morrison (2001) note that rural and urban areas report violence rates that are similar: 14.3% and 14.7% respectively. The problems schools face are, however, sometimes different. Urban schools are more diverse - students often live in poor neighborhoods with high crime, schools have climate problems, and some students display poor social development. Many rural schools have difficulties

with substance abuse, poverty, high unemployment rates, and accessing quality treatment services (Turcotte, 2006).

There are some common indicators of violence, regardless of school size and location. According to research conducted by Siao (2006), the schools reporting high numbers of violent incidents also had the largest numbers of students in special education and the largest number of students whose families live below the poverty line and/or on welfare.

#### *Increase in School Violence*

Many reports show increases in violence and the related need for sound safety planning. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects school violence data from school principals and has done so for years. The first large study on school violence was conducted in 1970; the Safe School Study surveyed principals, students, and teachers. In 1999-2000, the NCES found that 71% of elementary and high schools had at least one recorded incident of violence. Violent incidents were more likely to occur in urban schools and in schools with larger student bodies. "There seems to be notable recent increases in U.S. schools in bullying (NCES, 2003), and increases in violence in elementary schools" (Kondrasuk et al., 2005, p. 639). The NCES reported 32 school-associated violent deaths in 1999-2000 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003, para. 2). "The number of homicides of school-age youth ages 5-18 at school was higher in 2004-05 than in 2000-01" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006, Key Findings section, para. 1). Research conducted by *USA Today* shows there has been an increase from 9 serious cases of

violence in 2003 to 31 in 2005. Youth violence has been a significant concern in American society for many decades, but the severity and frequency of the violence has changed remarkably in the last couple of decades.

Violence is increasing on school campuses across the nation. A White House conference in October 2006, focused on the increasing number of violent acts occurring in American public schools. Many groups came together and produced a guide to help schools prepare and prevent violence (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The following highlights attacks that prompted this conference:

Charles Carl Roberts IV, age 32, killed five at an Amish school in Pennsylvania before he killed himself on October 2, 2006. He went into a single-room school and asked all males to leave before he started the massacre. The killings were reported to be a grudge killing ("Some fatal U.S.", 2006). Eric Hainstock, age 15, killed his principal in a rural school in Wisconsin on September 29, 2006. Duane Morrison, age 53, sexually assaulted six girls and shot one before shooting himself at Platte Canyon High School in Colorado on September 27, 2006. Christopher Williams, age 27, killed one teacher after killing his ex-girlfriend's mother. He went to the school on September 24, 2006, in Vermont where his ex-girlfriend was a teacher, but he couldn't find her. The police were looking for Christopher because the ex-girlfriend had called the police after he had stolen their car. When Christopher couldn't find her at the school, he shot and killed another teacher. He then went to a condo complex

and shot Chad Johansen (age 21); Christopher shot himself twice in the head ("Some fatal U.S.", 2006).

Additional violent incidents further elaborate the aforementioned increases in school violence in the last decades. A student was stabbed in the restroom at Southwood Middle School in FL. At a high school in Washington D.C. there was a shooting outside the cafeteria (Bucher & Manning, 2005). Nathaniel Brazill, age 13, killed his English teacher in Lake Worth, FL, on May 26, 2006. Brazill is serving 28 years for second degree murder. Jeff Weise, age 16, killed his grandfather and his friend. He then went to his school, Red Lake Indian Reservation in Minnesota, on March 21, 2005, where he killed one teacher, an unarmed guard, five students, and then himself. Desmond Keels, age 16, is facing a murder trial after he allegedly killed a student outside a school in Philadelphia over a fifty dollar debt in a rap contest. James Sheets, age 14, killed his principal and then himself in a crowded cafeteria on April 24, 2003, in south-central Pennsylvania ("Some fatal U.S.", 2006).

The Columbine High School massacre remains the most notorious act of violence on a high school campus; however, there were numerous accounts of school shootings across the nation prior to that infamous day. Eric Harris, age 18, and Dylan Klebold, age 17, killed twelve students and one teacher, wounded 23, and then killed themselves in Littleton, CO, on April 20, 1999. On May 21, 1998, Kip Kinkel, age 17, killed his parents then killed two teens, and wounded twenty in Springfield, OR, when he opened fire at a high school. Kinkel is serving a 112-year sentence. On May 19, 1998, Jacob Davis, age 18, an honor student

in Fayetteville, TN, killed his ex-girlfriend's new boyfriend three days before graduation. He is serving life in prison. On March 24, 1998, in Jonesboro, AK, two boys aged eleven and thirteen opened fire on students and teachers after one of the boys pulled the fire alarm, and the students proceeded out of the building. They killed four students and one teacher. The boys are being held until they are 21 years of age. Michael Carneal, age 14, killed three students in West Paducah, KY, on December 1, 1997. He is serving a life sentence. Luke Woodham, age 17, stabbed another student to death and killed two others in Pearl, MS, on October 1, 1997. He is serving three life sentences ("Some fatal U.S.", 2006). In 2003, teachers at Roosevelt High School, located in Seattle, WA, heard a rumor that a student's life was in danger. A school athlete was killed before an investigation could determine the identify of the person who made the threat.

The examples that follow demonstrate the nature of the problem at school - related events: In September 2004, a fourteen-year-old boy was running with his cross country team in San Diego, CA, when his father shot him and then turned the gun on himself (Pascopella, 2004). In 2005, at least four people were killed while watching or playing a school-related sport. Increases in school violence at school-related events continued into 2006 with the following occurrences. Four men were arrested in Nashville, TN, when they brought firearms to a football game. One teenager was killed and eight others wounded in shootings after a football game in Dallas, TX. A basketball game was ended early because of fighting in the stands. The police had to use pepper spray at

this fight in Rochester, NY. A gun was found on one teenager after police had to clear the stands at a football game in Sacramento, CA, because adults and teens were fighting. In Montgomery County, MD, a fifteen-year-old girl was stabbed to death at a football game. Basketball game fights have been reported in Greensburg, PA, and around the country (Stover, 2006a). These examples reinforce the importance of sound safety planning for school events. Trump states “do not assume security for these events has been handled by the administration because they see a couple of police officers at the game” (Stover, 2006a, p. 42).

In closing, administrators, teachers, and students face threats to their personal safety during regular school hours and at school-related functions. Nearly 23 percent, or one-fourth, of public school students report having been a victim of an act of violence at school. Prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, few could image that crime and violence in public schools would encompass rape, robbery, murder, arson, and other heinous crimes (Bennett-Johnson, 2004). This increase in school violence supports the rational that schools need to become safe havens for students and teachers. Information on teachers’ perceptions related to school violence and ways to improve their self-efficacy is lacking.

#### *Under-Reporting of Violent Incidents*

Schools may appear to be safe on the surface; however, that perception can be misleading because the government relies on self-reported data from school districts to formulate its statistics. Many educators believe that government statistics understate the violence present in schools. In addition,

“Some school safety experts argue that the federal studies are fundamentally flawed because they base their conclusions on 3-to 4-year-old data that do not provide an accurate picture of the most current trends” (Hurst, 2005, p.33).

According to Hevesi (2006) “Annual reports on school violence do not convey the full seriousness of the situation.” School employees may have been exposed to violence more than has been “previously disclosed” (p. 2). A 2003 survey conducted by the National Association of School Resources Officers revealed that 89% of the respondents thought that school crimes were under reported (Bucher & Manning, 2005).

The *Gang Intervention Handbook* states that the under-reporting of crime has led to an all-time low in the accountability for serious, violent crimes occurring in schools. Many times students get in trouble at school, but they are not reported to the legal system. Therefore, they do not experience strong negative consequences for their actions (Poland, 1994). Thus, the result of under-reporting is protection of the violent offenders from legal consequences. Under-reporting, also termed “camouflaging,” is perpetuated by school administrators who wish to avoid having their schools labeled as “problem schools” (Howard, 2001, p. 28). In Baltimore, the teachers’ union reported that staff members felt pressure from some principals to minimize the number of incident reports after 15 of the district’s schools were only one year away from being labeled as dangerous. The teachers’ union stated this action only decreased the number of student suspensions, instead of addressing the problem (Bucher & Manning, 2005).



While violence reporting is required by the Federal No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB), “local officials often cover up fights, muggings, and other incidents, for fear of looking bad,” according to Hevesi in his May 2006 report criticizing the Department of Education in New York (Karlin, 2007, para. 6). Violence reporting is also problematic because it is skewed by the school officials’ perceptions. “One school official may view an incident in which a student jabs a classmate with a pencil as a stabbing or assault, while another may say an assault would have to involve bloodshed” (Karlin, 2007, para. 8).

School resource officers (SROs) and administrators disagree over the reporting of school violence incidents. Many SROs assert that administrators have the opportunity to manipulate reporting by not choosing to investigate possible incidents and by not including SROs when they should. There is a gray area of “discretion” which exists between school discipline and statute law.

Under-reporting school violence can be linked with a school district’s self-assessment. Many school districts fail to use proper survey instruments. School officials do not evaluate reported incident data and compare it with self-reported information on surveys. They do not conduct yearly physical assessments of their campuses and facilities to determine where potential incidents could occur (Dufresne, 2005).

School districts can write their own definitions of “persistently dangerous and only 54 schools in the nation were identified as persistently dangerous in 2003. Many states define “persistently dangerous” in such a way that it is extremely unlikely the schools in the state would earn this label unless many

violent incidents happened over and extended time, and the reporting at the school was thorough. Sarah Carr (2007) at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* noted that 16 calls to police in 2006 assisted in earning Todd County High School in South Dakota a “persistently dangerous” rating. However, 263 calls made to police at Bay View High School, 299 calls from Custer High School, and 187 calls from Fritsche Middle School all located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, did not earn these schools a “persistently dangerous” label. At the time of article publication on May 9, 2007, no single school in the following major cities were labeled dangerous: Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Chicago, nor Boston. “The analysis also found that the dangerous school provision does little to foster accountability on school safety issue ... and could actually discourage accountability in some schools and states” (Carr, 2007, para. 6). Many school administrators under-report serious crimes at schools to avoid being labeled negatively, to avoid decreased enrollments, and to avoid paperwork. When a school is considered “persistently dangerous,” students must be allowed to change schools. This is often an additional expense to the persistently dangerous school because of transportation and decreased enrollments. The school also has an increase in paperwork because administrators have to develop an incident reduction plan (Stover, 2005).

Administrators also feel pressure to be soft on crime reporting because of the focus on property values, especially in wealthy school districts. Beverly Glenn, executive director at Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence at George Washington University stated, “Nobody wants to move into a

neighborhood where the school is characterized as violent” (Carr, 2007, para. 15).

Trump stated “schools are so concerned about protecting their public image that they often under-report school violence statistics” (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 58). For example, on Friday, January 19, 2007, a call came into Fort Payne High School in northeast Alabama. The caller stated that a bomb was in the school and was going to go off in one hour. The principal reported to the newspaper that “We had about 800 people off this campus in 10 minutes or so” (Burns, 2007, p. A3). However, he didn’t accurately report what really happened in evacuating students and staff, according to a veteran science teacher whose identity was kept confidential. The school had an intercom system that doubled as a telephone in each classroom. If the telephone was in use, the intercom system would not work. The science teacher was using the phone when the principal made a single announcement about the bomb threat. He also announced an evacuation route which was inconsistent with the school’s established safety policy and the routinely practiced drills. As a result, the science teacher and his students were not aware of the evacuation. When they were discovered to be continuing with class they did not make it to the evacuation buses for an additional 10 to 15 minutes because the teacher followed the established safety policy. This confusion was kept from the news media so that readers would believe that the incident had been capably handled (Burns, 2007).

The New York State Department of Education (SED) had serious concerns that crimes were being under-reported in their schools, so they conducted an audit. Three objectives in the schools' audit were

1. Make sure schools were reporting.
2. Identify schools that should be persistently dangerous.
3. Make sure that incidents were recorded accurately.

The study disclosed that there were "at least one third of the violent and disruptive incidents documented in the schools' records were not reported to SED" (Hevesi, 2006, p. 2). Eighty percent of incidents at several schools were not reported. Sexual offenses and offenses involving a weapon were also under-reported (Hevesi, 2006). The previous information is another justification for the focus of this study to be on teachers' perceptions of violence and not the principal's perceptions.

### Legal Implications of Student Violence

#### *Violence Against Teachers*

This section highlights violence against teachers which has resulted in a growing trend of teachers who seek retribution for violence committed by student by taking them and their parents to court. Teacher's safety needs should be met for them to perform teaching task at optimum level. Columbine images are still shown and "since 1999, deadly incidents have occurred in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alaska, Washington, Tennessee, New Mexico, Oregon, California, Minnesota and Florida. The vast majority of media coverage about school violence today focuses on violent attacks by students against fellow

students” (Kondrasuk et al., 2005, p. 638). Students, however, are not the only victims of violent acts. Assaults against teachers are on the rise. The National Center for Education Statistics (2003) reveals that there were 1.3 million nonfatal crimes, including 473,000 violent crimes, against America’s teachers between 1997-2001. This figure represents 324 violent crimes against the nation’s teachers every day (Kondrasuk et al., 2005, p. 639). According to a report by the U.S. Department of Education in 2000, almost one of every five public school teachers reported being verbally abused, while 8% reported being physically threatened (Kondrasuk et al., 2005). Data from a joint report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) attempts to “present a more complete portrait of crime and safety” (Bon, Faircloth, & LeTendre, 2006, p. 148) in the nation. The findings in this 2003 report provide the following statistics:

19% of public schools reported that student acts of disrespect occur on a daily or weekly basis; thirteen percent of public schools reported that student verbal abuse of teachers occurred on a daily or weekly basis; and three percent of public schools reported widespread disorder in the classrooms on a daily or weekly basis (Bon, Faircloth, & LeTendre, 2006, p. 148).

In North Carolina, the increases in violence are acknowledged; North Carolina’s schools and school districts are required to track incidents and report to the state education agency. In the 1995-1996 school year, 1,443 incidents were committed against employees. In 2002-2003, 8,548 criminal acts were

committed. The 2004 report shows "6.627 incidents of violence per 1000 students in the 2002-2003 school years" (Kondrasuk et al., 2005, p. 639).

Teachers who report being assaulted on campus often do not feel vindicated by the punishments meted out by the administration and school district. Many teachers have turned to the courts for justice. An 18-year-old at Hayfield High School in Alexandria, VA, pinned government teacher Deborah Sanville to a wall and was going to hit her when another teacher stopped the student. Sanville took the student to court, and he was charged with disorderly conduct. Sanville states,

School is so dangerous. These are huge men, and they think nothing of hitting us. But short of murder, teachers' unions say, incidents of assaults against teachers often are suppressed because school officials are concerned with tarnishing their institutions' reputations. (Portner, 1995, p.1)

Although there are no national statistics on just how many civil lawsuits teachers have filed against individual students or school districts seeking damages in regards to discipline problems, teachers' unions are reporting a rise in such cases. Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Utah are some of the states reporting an increase in teacher lawsuits against students.

The majority of teachers who take action on an assault in school file criminal charges against their assailants. But several states have laws on the books that make it easier for school employees to file civil lawsuits against assailants and exact monetary damages....Many teachers say

they hope that taking students and parents to court will help rein in some of the violence in their schools. Teachers who go to court say they hope to deter crime by sending a signal to students and their parents that there are consequences for violent actions. (Portner, 1995, p. 2)

Public school teachers will often take a cut in pay to work at a private school to avoid violence. “The children of many of the well-intentioned folks whose good intentions brought disruptive and violent behavior to public schools – the children of lawyers, lawmakers, and judges – are safely ensconced in private schools where students who can’t behave are wisely, swiftly ejected” (Marcus, 1994, p. 17).

#### *Laws to Address Violence*

President Bill Clinton’s administration was the first to address the issue of school violence. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994, was comprised of eight goals for American schools to achieve in order to improve education for their students. Goal 6 advocated that all schools would be drug and violence free by the year 2000. Clinton signed another crime bill in 1994 with the purpose of reducing crime and violence. The bill provided funding for additional police resources and more prisons. The component which impacted youth allowed juveniles who committed certain violent crimes to be tried as adults. The bill also allocated funding from crime prevention (Brunner & Lewis, 2006).

According to NCES (2003) “between 1997-2001 there were 1.3 million nonfatal crimes (including 473,000 violent crimes) against America’s teachers. That equals approximately 324 violent crimes against our nation’s teachers each

day in the United States” (Kondrasuk et al., 2005, p. 639). If we really want to give public schools a chance, we can’t expect teachers to teach and be cops and social workers all at once” (Kondrasuk et al., 2005, p. 638).

A growing number of laws hamstring teachers and administrators from dealing forcefully and freely with violent and emotionally disturbed teens. For any teacher or principal looking to remove a troublemaker, there are batteries of forms to be filed and endless judicial hoops to jump through. (Marcus, 1994, p.16)

At Dewitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, a student in special education was caught with a four-inch knife. He was not suspended due to a New York law stating the knife couldn’t be considered a weapon due to its length. The student was transferred after the teachers’ union stated they would make the event public. In 1992, a student in northeast Washington D.C. was allowed back on campus after serving a 25-day suspension for firing a gun on the playground. This punishment was school policy for first offense with a gun. Principals, teachers, and the parent-teacher association all protested and asked that the offender be transferred (Marcus, 1994).



The Goss vs. Lopez Supreme Court case and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) law have been criticized as hindrances to administrators in their attempts to punish disruptive students. Gross vs. Lopez states that students must receive a hearing if suspension is more than ten days. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that special education students can't be suspended or receive certain other punishments if the crime resulted from their handicap. For example, if a student receiving special education services has impulse control disorder and slaps a teacher, the Individual Education Plan team along with the due process officer may determine that the occurrence was due to the student disability, and the student would not receive the same punishment as a regular education counterpart.

In contrast, some states have implemented rules that are viewed by some as too rigid. In Florida, if a student identifies an intended human target of violence, he or she can be charged with a second-degree felony, which is defined as a written threat to harm another person. Two third graders were arrested in Ocala, FL, and carried out of the school in handcuffs when they drew pictures of their classmates stabbed and hanged. Ocala Police Sergeant Russ Kern stated, "We don't have the luxury of saying this is just child's play" (Stover, 2005, p. 14).

#### Natural Disasters

Protection against violence is most people's foremost concern when the topic of school safety arises. However, school safety is a much broader topic that must encompass other potential hazards such as natural disasters. Global

issues of natural disasters and their impact on schools, research studies with professional perspectives, and illustrations from specific natural disasters are highlighted in this section.

“Worldwide children are impacted by natural disasters” (Evans & Oehler-Stinnett, 2006, p. 33). One storm can kill more students than all school shootings combined. According to United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) “One-third of the 153,000 people killed in South Asia as a result of the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami” were children. On the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website one can find plans for the International Disaster Reduction Day. This day focuses on education about preventing disasters. The 2007 year’s slogan, created by a student, is “One lesson at school saves one hundred lives” (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2007, para. 6). UNESCO also reports that,

Despite the efforts of local communities, governments and international organizations, natural disasters continue to exact a terrible toll worldwide in human, economic and environmental terms. Recent months have witnessed several such disasters: floods and storms have ravaged Haiti, Jamaica and other countries of the Caribbean as well as parts of Latin America, India, Bangladesh and China; powerful earthquakes have struck the Islamic Republic of Iran and Morocco; locusts and drought have continued to plague Africa; and wildfires have wrought devastation in several parts of Europe. Moreover, it is the poor and disadvantaged who

tend to suffer the most as a consequence of these natural calamities.  
(UNESCO, 2007, para. 7)

The governments in these areas rely on aid from national organizations and other countries. The United Nations Children's fund is one such organization that is providing training to teachers and distributing school supply kits to areas that the tsunami destroyed. UNICEF estimates 1.5 million children survived the tsunami, and many have been separated from their families or orphaned. In Sri Lanka alone, 112 schools were damaged or destroyed and 244 schools are occupied by refugees (Trotter, 2005). According to Stephen Moseley, president of the Academy for Education and Development, an expert who is working to get schools open in these areas, "Schooling becomes an expression of hope for parents to energize themselves and take responsibility for their children" (Trotter, 2005, p.13). Opening and repairing schools is one of the major problems that governments face after a disaster. This is in addition to helping orphaned children, preventing children from becoming vulnerable to sex trafficking, providing basic supplies to survivors, reuniting families, burying the dead, stopping disease, and providing money. The list seems endless (Trotter, 2005).

There are many issues that the United States federal, state, and local governments face after a natural disaster. Getting aid to the victims is sometimes impossible due to the devastation in the area of the disaster. Recently federal agencies have been criticized for slow aid to Hurricane Katrina victims. Hurricane Katrina displaced and, worse, killed students, and is one of the most devastating natural disasters in American history. "The emotional

trauma ... may never go away. A million people were uprooted by Hurricane Katrina, including an estimated 372,000 children of school age” (Lawrence, 2006, p. 5). According to a National Public Radio broadcast on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006, enrollment for New Orleans public schools was more than 65,000 pre-Katrina (Abramson, 2006). Fewer than 22,000 students had returned by the date of the broadcast. In the spring semester of the 2006-2007 school year, New Orleans had reached 40% of pre-Katrina enrollment with only 45% of schools open (Jervis, 2007). When a storm hits, such as in the case of Katrina, and people leave, the school districts see much of their tax support leave. Schools also have a decreased enrollment, and this makes it difficult for schools to retain staff. This was a concern for many districts in the gulf coast region. The St. Tamany School District in LA, offered early-retirement plans to deter teacher layoffs (Sack, 2005). School closings create economical stress and havoc for families; they also create a ripple effect throughout the community (Krisberg, 2007).

Another issue the federal, state, and local governments and school boards have addressed is displaced students. As of February 1, 2006, the numbers were changing daily. The following states reported over 1,000 displaced students who had relocated to their districts after Katrina: Texas, 40,200; Florida, 5,600; Georgia, 10,300; Alabama, 5,400; Tennessee, 3,180; Michigan, 1,436; California and North Carolina, 1,000 each; and Illinois, 1,017. Hurricane Rita came three weeks after Katrina which forced even more students to leave. An accurate count of students in many schools is impossible due to people enrolling and withdrawing each day (Glenn, 2006). Educators are trying to provide the care

students need. Some students have changed schools many times and others find themselves in their senior year away from the school they attended since kindergarten (Jacobson, 2006). Taking in the displaced students is costing money for many states. Debbie Graves Ratcliffe, a spokesperson for Texas Education Agency said, "It's not fair that it's going to blow huge holes in [local districts'] budgets and the state budget (Klein, 2006a, p.2). It has also been reported that the displaced students cost more to educate because of the emotional issues that require more interventions. Counselors and security were added to many sites to help with the emotional issues and turf wars between new students and existing students in rival gangs. Many students are lagging behind academically because of the differences in schools' curriculums and, of course, absences (Glenn, 2006). Ratcliffe stated 80% of the states' general population 5<sup>th</sup> graders passed the English portion of the Texas state test which is utilized as a promotion criteria for students to move into the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, only 47% of the displaced 5<sup>th</sup> graders passed (Klein, 2006a). This is one of the reasons that the state department of education decided to release the federal money sooner to local districts (Hoff, 2007).

Governors and others urged congressional leaders to pass an emergency spending bill to help schools affected by the storms (Klein, 2006b). The Hurricane Education Recovery Act provides 1.4 billion in hurricane – related aid to k-12 schools, and 645 million goes to states to cover the cost of educating displaced students. Forty-nine states and the District of Columbia had applied for aid by the deadline (Klein, 2006a). When the federal law was passed, Joseph

Morton, Alabama's State Superintendent, stated in a press release "Those students came with no school textbooks, no permanent school records, in many cases no clothes, and in almost all cases with more psychological and social needs than many of us can imagine" (Jacobson, 2006, p. 4).

Unfortunately, Morton was called on to help another school shortly after the press release. On March 1, 2007, a tornado hit Enterprise High School in Alabama. This natural disaster killed eight students and left dozens injured. The school was directly hit by the tornado while teachers and students were moving to an inner hallway. There has been some questioning by teachers in south Alabama why students weren't dismissed before the storm. Linda Garrett (university director) stated, "The school was the best built, safest place. These are high school students, and most drive to school... Keeping them there in the interior hallway is in the best interests of the students. They followed the procedure..." (Alabama Education Association, 2007, p. 1).

### Terrorism

Terrorism is a growing threat to school safety. A global explanation of terrorism is presented and followed by an explanation of how terrorism has become a substantial threat to the nation's schools. Professional opinions and studies are presented. This section concludes with specific examples of how threats of terrorism reshape a district's safety plans. The overarching theme is schools need to be prepared for this relatively new threat to safety. Because terrorism is a newer phenomenon in America than natural disasters and shootings, the researcher goes into detail explaining how terrorism can take root.

Terrorists have already struck schools in other countries and the September 11, 2001, attacks occurred near half a dozen schools in New York.

John Shattuck discussed the “relationship between religious freedom and terrorism” (Shattuck, 2003, para. 3) while giving the keynote address at Harvard Law school on February 15, 2002. After WWII, a “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” was drafted that introduced “tolerance of religious difference - an idea that was offered in response to the long and bloody history of religious conflict that had included, in Europe alone, the Crusades, the Islamic conquests, the Inquisition, ... and most recently the Holocaust” (Shattuck, 2003, para. 4).

Shattuck goes on to point out that

Tolerance of religious difference is essential for the internal protection of religion itself, even a dominant, majority religion. Without the freedom of internal debate, religion is always in danger of being hijacked by fanatics like Osama bin Laden, who will use it to aggrandize their power. The strength of a religion is dependent upon its willingness to tolerate internal differences within that faith, which in turn necessitates tolerance of different religions. (para. 6)

Shattuck then explains the warning signs in the 1990s when human rights crises in “Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Afghanistan...” (Shattuck, 2003, II section, para. 7) produced millions of refugees. These areas became “breeding grounds for terrorism” (Shattuck, 2003, para. 7). Kennedy (2007) also confirms that terrorism is rampant in societies where hopelessness thrives. The citizens’

suffering makes it easier for leaders, who have a terrorist agenda, to capitalize on the people's misfortunes.

Obviously, not all acts of terrorism have a religious basis. Unfortunately, some people want to hurt others because they feel they have been mistreated. Some simply want to destroy others.

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks left an indelible mark on American society. That catastrophic event profoundly illustrated the vulnerability of the nation – from airlines to classrooms. Before 9/11, airline security was low because no one wanted to have “fear or panic” (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 3). This same caution is prevalent among school leaders. A 2004 FBI bulletin stated that school building information and school safety plans were confiscated during a raid in Iraq (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention & U.S. Department of Education, 2004). American schools are targets for terrorist attacks (Grossman & Degaetano, 1999). The largest attack at a school was in Russia when terrorists killed 350 people; more than half were children (Maxwell, 2006; & Public Agency Training Council, 2007).

U. S. Education Secretary Rodney Paige visited Ground Zero after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Paige then sent each chief state school officer suggestions to manage a crisis. School management (legislators, school boards, government officials, school principals, superintendents) have a duty to make sure plans are made and that the plans are based on the best practices possible (Black, 2004). A January 2006 study which was published in *Pediatrics* found “important deficiencies” in school emergency and disaster planning. This study cited that



57% of 3,670 school superintendents surveyed nationwide reported their school districts had a plan for the prevention of a terrorist or mass-casualty event. However, the study revealed that 43% reported having no written prevention plan. Nearly one quarter of the survey participants said their school districts' evacuation plan lacked specific details on children with special health care needs. While almost every school had an evacuation plan, 30% of superintendents said an evacuation drill had never been practiced (Krisberg, 2007, p. 2). "Incidents such as 9/11 and Columbine demonstrate how crucial the actions taken within the first few minutes of responding to a crisis are to the management of the situation. School and communities must prepare for an emergency before it happens" (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 2).

A terrorist attack against a school is a relatively rare occurrence. However, the likelihood that schools will be close to a terrorist target is great. For example, when the first plane hit the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11, 2001, seven schools were beginning classes within 6 blocks of the North tower. The children were definitely affected by the attack. Many parents from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut were working at the World Trade Center, and parents across the nation rushed to schools to pick up their children ("Schools and Terrorism", 2004). Schools can prepare for terrorist attacks by developing a school safety plan including plans for terrorist attacks (Dufresne, 2005).

Terrorism threats and attacks can reshape the safety plans of school districts. Sunshine Elementary School in Connecticut is one example. Ms. King,

a teacher, received fresh cut flowers at school, and read the card to the class. Ms. King, twenty students, an administrator, and three office staff employees that were around the flowers became ill within two days. The emergency room (ER) doctor was concerned with the symptoms and commonalities of the complaints by students and the teacher who visited the ER and reported his findings to the Department of Public Health (DPH). DPH reported concerns to the district school officials; however, they were not alarmed because it was the season for flu, which yields similar symptoms. DPH sent blood samples to the Centers for Disease Control, and the agency confirmed the doctor's suspicion – Anthrax. Ms. King died from her exposure to the Anthrax spores (Cosh, Davis, Fullwood, Lippek, & Middleton, 2003). After this tragedy the school district developed policies and emergency plans to safe guard their schools against terrorism.

#### Principal Influence on Safe School Environment and Climate

Principal influence can shape a school environment and climate. One of the research hypotheses in this study focuses on teachers' perceived self-efficacy in correlation to their perception of the principal's ability and attitude toward crises. The focus of this section includes the principal's role in shaping the school climate and the overall school environment, as well as effective and ineffective responses by the principal.

#### *Ineffective Principal Responses*

Robert B. Irvine, president of the Institute for Crisis Management, analyzed more than 50,000 news stories on school-related crises. His conclusion was that "many school problems grow into full-blown crises because

administrators fail to act quickly” (“Thrust for Education”, 1997, p.7). The media relays alarming stories about school crises, which leads to the public’s questioning of school officials about emergency plans (Goldberg, 2007). The fear of being criticized and lack of training manifests itself in a common response by administrators faced with a crisis – ignore it, according to Oates (Poland, 1994). Building administrators are conditioned to keep negative occurrences and situations quiet because of negative attention. They may opt out of calling a crisis team quickly to investigate the incidents. This delayed response may cause additional problems. Also, situations may “arouse an administrator’s feelings of being singularly responsible for major problems that occur in the building” (Lichtenstein, Schonfeld, & Kline, 1994, p. 82).

A principal’s ineffectiveness has far-reaching implications. He or she is not only judged by the initial response to an emergency but by his or her response following the crisis. For example, children who were kidnapped on a bus in Chouchilla, CA, were not provided school or mental health counseling. Five years later, all the children showed signs of fear, anxiety, and/or depression.

#### *Effective Principal Responses*

An effective principal response to an emergency is planned, prepared, and practiced well in advanced of the crises (Gilderman, 2006; National Association of School Psychologists, 2006). Principals should encourage development of crisis preparedness plans which encompass the entire community and mandate practice drills for school effectiveness. It is documented that teachers desire administrators’ involvement and support (Yoon & Gilchrist, 2003). According to

Williams (1998), school violence is more likely to occur in “schools with weak administrators” (p.10). Administrators can make the school physical site safer, and more significantly develop a school culture that combats violence (Horner, 2006). The increases in well-publicized violent acts on school campuses in recent years have increased society’s awareness of the potential for school violence. Aaron Rischer, Esko Superintendent – MN, believes “that ever since the recent rash of school shootings and violence ... people are becoming more aware that whether or not it may ever happen—but it’s always a possibility they need to be prepared for” (Gilderman, 2006, p. 2). The following illustrations illustrate that effective principal responses are planned in advanced, well before crises develop so that principals can lead a school through emergencies.

After a bomb exploded in a Cokeville, WY, middle school, administrators got students back to school the next day and initiated meetings for parents and children. Children “who were most verbal about their feelings recovered the most quickly” (Poland, 1994, p. 177). This incident emphasizes the importance of providing counseling, and processing activities.

Susan Black describes an elementary principal’s response during a “lockdown.” Two sheriff’s deputies had been killed near the school, and the suspects were reported armed and dangerous. The principal typed an email to her teachers and then used the PA system to tell teachers to read their email immediately. This was done to prevent causing alarm to the children. The principal had established procedures in place before this crisis. She moved

quickly to lockdown the school effectively; the entry from the outside of the school was sealed and all students were accounted for (Black, 2004).

The following is examples of exemplary responses on behave of the administrator and school. This principal's immediate and capable action demonstrates effective management strategies that help teachers and students feel safe under the principal's leadership. A child in kindergarten was shot on a bus enroute to school a few blocks from the school, and the driver quickly called dispatch. The bus driver drove quickly to the school and an ambulance arrived. The police came quickly and screened entrances to make sure the media and others did not gain access to the school. The principal guided students riding the bus into the school where mental health professionals talked to students and allowed them to express their feeling by drawing pictures. When parents arrived to pick up their children, a psychologist explained "symptoms of psychological trauma" (Lichtenstein, Schonfeld, & Kline, 1994, p. 79) and children's potential reactions. Children who stayed at school the entire day were sent home with a note stating incident facts and describing support services that would be available. A staff meeting was called after school, and teachers expressed their feelings and received an update on the child's status from police officers. Crisis response team members described the services available to teachers, staff, students, and the community. Teachers were told dismissal procedures and were issued a memo detailing the emergency staff meeting. The next week the school became a meeting place for the community about violence prevention,

counseling services, and mental health services referrals (Lichtenstein, Schonfeld, & Kline, 1994).

Principals should inform the public about their crisis preparedness plans before a crisis strikes; this helps build community understanding if something happens. Tom Cawcutt, Jr., the principal of Cromwell-Wright School in MN, states “We are prepared for crisis, but unfortunately, best laid plans can’t prevent everything. Something can still happen and there’s no way to prevent everything. But we’re doing all we can” (Gilderman, 2006, p. 2). Cawcutt made this statement when he was talking with parents and community members during a keep student’s safe Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) meeting. Discussion included what is required and what is in place concerning safety (Gilderman, 2006).

The National Association of School Psychologists encourages principals to write a letter to parents stating what the school has in place in case of emergencies. The organization also encourages administrators to meet and greet students each day and be visible in the school, to tour classrooms, to write a press release which includes school expectations about behavior and crisis planning, and to review and update crisis plans annually. Other helpful tips to improve safety include checking communication systems and determining how parents will be informed if an emergency occurs, incorporating community agencies (hospitals, emergency responders, and police) in response plans, and providing training for staff and highlighting prevention programs (National Association of School Psychologists, 2006). “Failure to prepare for a crisis leads

to failure to effectively manage the unpredictability of such situations requiring immediate response” (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006, p.2).

### *School Climate*

There is a direct correlation between a positive school climate and school safety (Bass, 2004). A positive school climate that is nurturing, warm, and tolerant, with positive attitudes toward diversity. A positive school climate is one in which respect for others’ points of view is encouraged; cooperation, expectations of appropriate behavior are established; and positive behavior is reinforced. In a positive school climate teachers and students cooperate, and there is a sense of community. Counseling opportunities are also provided for students. Equitable and appropriate policies are utilized by educators in the school, and a “punishment culture” is avoided. Instead, teachers help students make “sensitive, informed choices about what is right and good” (Bucher & Manning, 2005, p. 58). The lack of a positive climate may have a detrimental effect on school safety.

A negative school climate with poor communication between administrators and faculty, unclear rules and reward structures, ambiguous consequences for misbehaviors, feelings by students that they are not valued or respected by educators, low expectations for student achievement, little engagement of students in the learning process, low morale of students and educators, and disorderly classroom environments can have an impact on safety (Bucher & Manning, 2005, p. 57).

The literature supports that when schools work positively with parents and community agencies a better school climate is produced. Students can help with school safety and improve the school climate by reporting incidents that make them feel uncomfortable. Students should be advised to stay away from drugs and to report those who use drugs. The same advice applies to guns and other weapons. Conflict mediation skills and anti-violence programs can help students deal with personal issues. Anger, depression, and uncontrollable emotions are personality characteristics that require the intervention of a qualified counselor (Brunner & Lewis, 2005). A school's administration should strive to maintain open communications and know where to get help for students who feel upset.

#### Teachers' Role

Teachers' perceptions will be one of the major foci of this study. The objective is to determine ways to help teachers feel more prepared and to provide administrators with recommendations on how to achieve this. In this section, the research explores literature on teacher's perceptions and roles in relation to school safety.

Teacher's desire assistance from the leaders in their schools to prepare for crises. As mentioned in the theoretical foundation section of this research, teacher's safety and other needs should be met for their optimum performance. Administrators can assist teachers in this endeavor. In a study of teachers' perceptions, Yoon and Gilchrist (2003) found that teachers preferred direct involvement by administrators for support in handling difficult students. "Administrative support in managing students' difficult behaviors has been found



to be critical” (p. 565). Seventy-two percent of teachers surveyed wanted problem students removed from the classroom and punished by administrators. Thirty seven percent of teachers reported that direct involvement in discipline was the most important support needed. Emotional support was desired by 22.8%. Administrative support was also desired in teacher training on how to manage difficult students and how to manage stress. “Lack of administrative support has consistently been linked to teacher stress and low commitment to the profession of teaching” (Yoon & Gilchrist, 2003, p. 565). Administrators are most effective when they know how to assist teachers and how to be sensitive to their needs. The stressors for educators continue to grow.

Demands and workplace pressures occur in all jobs. Larger workloads with decreasing resources, an increasing pace of work, and the push for improved, high quality products are all realities of employment for most individuals. When this experience is combined with additional factors such as extreme shortages in personnel, high stakes accountability measures, diminishing decision-making power, and social changes that greatly impact work process, school personnel find themselves under extremely stressful conditions. On top of this, school personnel must be well aware of the student population that they serve, being observant and attending to behavior that may be threatening. Long-term stress of this magnitude is physically and emotionally unhealthy for school personnel and debilitating to the education profession (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2006, para.1).

The following is a list of stressors for teachers: large classes, lack of training, lack of support from leadership, large numbers of student behavioral problems, external parent and community pressure, daily lesson preparedness, and inability to manage student behavior. A little stress serves as a motivator to complete task by deadlines. Long-term stress can lead to clinical depression and the “inability to adapt physiologically” (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2006, para. 2). Helping teachers understand stress and how to cope can improve student performance and allow teachers to handle student problems in times of crisis. Stress management needs to take place daily; teachers must understand their own feelings, recognize stressors and their origins (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2006).

Teachers are less likely to be effective leaders of students if they themselves do not receive support during a crisis. Teachers serve as a support system for children, families, and community. The support system is a cause for concern; 41% of teachers reported problems at home and school due to the 9/11 attacks. In a 2004 study, teachers were asked to respond to how many times they “(1) counseled student(s) one-on-one, (2) referred student(s) to a school psychologist (3) contacted a student’s parent about his/her child’s reaction, and (4) held class discussions” (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004, p. 251). The results showed that 73% contacted a parent while 63% referred students to a psychologist, and 47% counseled a student one-on-one. Only 10% did one-on-one counseling very often. Class discussions were held by 93% of the teachers surveyed. Teachers also report doing “art projects, puppet plays, and faculty and

student assemblies” (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004, p. 254). In the same study, teachers surveyed at the end of the school year following 9/11 said they still needed help in the following 9 areas: “(1) what to tell students (2) how to tell students (3) answering student questions (4) dealing with students’ emotional reactions (5) identifying children with emotional reactions (6) students’ behavioral problems (7) resolving ethical dilemmas (8) knowing how to balance priorities (9) deciding how much class time” (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004, p. 251). Results from this study also showed a correlation between teachers feeling prepared before the attacks and during the attacks. At the end of the year, teachers’ feelings of preparedness and self confidence decreased from a high of 45% prior to 9/11 to 16% at the end of the school year. The authors attribute this “to increased awareness of the gravity of problems they potentially face in the aftermath of a future terrorist attack” (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004, p. 255). There were negative correlations between teachers who felt need for help and teachers referring students to a school psychologist. The authors note

It may be that teachers with the greatest need for help were less able to act because they were overwhelmed and/or lacked self confidence. They may have been particularly reluctant to act when it meant that another adult would be involved, perhaps because another adult might recognize the teacher’s inability to handle the situation (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004, p. 256).

This would not necessarily have been a conscious reaction on the part of a teacher. Fifty percent of the teachers surveyed were a lot more interested in

learning how to help students deal with crises after the attacks. Ninety-seven percent of teachers wanted to learn age-appropriate interventions to help students cope (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004).

“As the most direct link to children in schools, teachers not only meet the educational needs of their students, they frequently serve as caregivers for children, each other, and members of the community at large as well as their own families” (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2006, para. 1). Teachers help students and entire families after crisis. The school is the first responders; unfortunately, many are ill-prepared to handle the needs of the students (Sack, 1997). According to Young (1996), school staff often lacks training. School administrators think that violence or disaster won't happen at their schools. Administrators can provide training through workshops, literature, conventions offered by local, state, and national organizations, university courses, and consultations with other professionals in the field.

In a study conducted by Shirley Smith-Greer (2001), the researcher found that teachers feel they need to be trained on how to handle violent students and situations, and also need to receive in-service training on techniques to combat school violence. “Both teachers and administrators perceive that they do not know how to defuse violent students nor do they perceive themselves knowing how to handle violent situations that occur in the classroom or on the school campus” (p. 79) It was found that neither teacher nor administrators receive a lot of training on school violence (Smith-Greer, 2001). Similar results were found in a 1998 study regarding training. Nims and Wilson (1998) conducted a survey of

administrators and department heads at teacher education programs which revealed that 44% of administrators “indicated that violence prevention is incorporated in existing courses. A little less than half the administrators believed that more needed to be done to prepare teachers in violence prevention” (p.2).

## Crisis Management and Planning

### *Safety Plans*

Statistics show that school campuses are increasingly at risk of violent incidents, natural disasters, or other incidents. While some of these incidents are preventable, others are inevitable (Daplan, 2006; Livingston, 2006). Therefore, it is imperative for schools to have a well-developed safety plans. Kenneth Trump, president of the National School and Security Services, purports that schools are ripe for increased violence. Factors that may contribute to this predicted spike in violence include weakened budgets, squeezing prevention programs out, and singular focus on test scores.

“Whether the crisis involves violence, terrorism, or natural disaster, the lesson remains the same: plan, prepare, and practice” (Trump & Lavarello, 2003, p. 20). Natural disasters can strike anytime. The first line of defense is to have an effective plan. The research reveals that crisis planning and training is key to effective, efficient response. McIntyre and Reid (1989) note obstacles to crisis planning. These obstacles include the myth that if the principal takes action, it will make the problem worse, crisis planning is not in anyone’s job description, lack of needed resources, and no curriculum units of safety, problem solving, and

conflict resolution. Schools many times use the plans of others without adapting their own guidelines and making the plan fit their respective schools.

Many districts also do not practice or test the plans. When school resource officers were surveyed, they reported that their schools' plans were untested and/or unpracticed (Champion, 1993). The plan should be reviewed and updated based on current research. "Schools cannot afford to ignore the necessity of crises preparedness" (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 2). Etowah High School in Gadsden, AL, implements security precautions. They practice lockdowns and have a detailed emergency plan. Gadsden City High has 78 security cameras. Etowah High School's administrators require detailed hall passes showing times and destinations.

"A dusty crisis plan sitting on a shelf is hardly worth the paper it is written on" (Trump & Lavarello, 2003, p. 21). The failure to practice or test the plan does nothing to promote teacher confidence in the ability to handle a crisis. In fact, it may leave teachers feeling helpless. Unfortunately, some safety plans are just dusty documents that administrators pull off the shelf to justify that they are developing safe schools. The following example illustrates this point.

The lockdown code for Collinsville School, a K-12 public school in rural northeast Alabama, is an announcement over the public address system: "would the person who has the book *The Red Badge of Courage* bring it to the office?" The code was issued in 2007 when two armed prison escapees were reported to be in the school vicinity. The staff didn't know how to respond to the code; most didn't even know what the code meant. Teachers couldn't recite the code when

asked. According to Hull (2001), many school codes are confusing and vague. He suggests using simple color codes that are universal throughout the entire district. The codes should be simple and communicated. The training of the staff is imperative, and practice drills should be frequent.

Adams and Kritsonis recommend doing tabletop drills (where teams/staff members receive written scenarios and teams attempt to solve problems and decrease negative consequences). These tabletop drills are recommended if full scale drills are not possible. Other schools have emergency plans and some practice drills; however, none do simulations that tell how well responses will work in an actual crisis. Trump charges that the simulations don't occur because "effective crisis planning is made vulnerable by denial, image concerns, and political influence" (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 3).

It is better for a school to develop a personalized plan than to simply pay someone to do it. Plans need to be a group effort. Staff members need and desire training. The development of a plan and training procedures is not that difficult because numerous resources are available. The government is providing a lot of material to help schools to do a better job (Dufresne, 2005; Education Development Center, 2006).

Kitty Porterfield, director of communications for Virginia's Fairfax County Public Schools said, "Good crisis preparedness requires a culture shift. It requires leadership from the top, a critical mass of trained staff members, careful planning, and excellent communication" (Padgett, 2006, p. 27). Many schools avoid trouble because they create "a strong, deliberate crisis plan and know how

to implement it effectively” (Padgett, 2006, p. 28). Unfortunately, most planning is done after a traumatic event (Young, Poland & Griffin, 1996).

The four phases of an emergency plan are prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (The U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The American Red Cross’s four stages are mitigation and prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Planning is a continuous process and plans are never finished. Good planning will make the response coordinated, rapid, and more effective (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006).

The Virginia Department of Education Resource Guide for Crisis Management in Schools says, “Boards should establish a policy foundation and framework conveying the seriousness of emergency planning. Policies should stipulate all aspects of crisis management, from designing, updating, and implementing plans to rehearsing drills in the community, district, and school buildings” (Black, 2004, p. 4). The increase in well-publicized violent incidents and other crises on the nation’s school campuses has led to more intense scrutiny of crisis management and planning. As stated above, teachers and administrators sometimes lack training. According to Graveline, (2003):

Experts have warned that without trained faculty, crisis plans are not effective (American Society of Safety Engineers Foundation, 2000; Bender & McLaughlin, 1997; Callahan, 1998; Hull 2000; Mississippi Department of Education, 1998; Myles & Simpson, 1994; National Education Association, 2000; Raudenbush, 1990; 2000; Small & Terrick, 2001; Stephen, 1994; Taylor & Hawkins, Trump, 1999; White & Beal, 1999). (p. 69)



### *Training*

Training time is scarce because most of a school's time is devoted to academic issues. When a crisis strikes, "a lack of preparation may result in greater tragedy and a tarnished reputation for both the principal and the overall school community... time should be allocated for the training of all staff members for the role of first responder" (Brunner & Lewis, 2006, p. 46). Teams should be developed to the regional team and encompass district level administrators and professionals outside the system. The school district team is comprised of administrators, health, mental health, and police officers. This group adapts recommendations of the regional team to the district. They provide districts with training and check to ensure that each school has a team. They are liaison between the regional and school team. They "coordinate special assignments of school and community personnel in the event of a crisis" (Lichtenstein, Schonfeld, & Kline, 1994, p. 80). Schools implement the response plan at the local level. Staffs members involved in the implementation are administrators, secretaries, teachers, school nurses, and school resource officers. Itinerant personnel such as school psychologists and social workers should also be involved.

Dr. Diamond, a professor at the University of Southern California, recommends an established safety team. It is difficult to bring in members of a team on an as-needed basis. Stakeholders need to participate. "Officials from New York University were able to respond quickly to various needs of its students immediately after the attacks of 9/11 due to the excellent relations it had

with its vendors, who provided needed supplies, such as cots and food, to stranded students.” (Dolan, 2006, p. 5) The communications with students and parents that Tulane University, President Scott Cowan, rapidly established through the internet after Hurricane Katrina helped the university (Cowen, 2006; Dolan, 2006). “Lessons learned from high-profile violent incidents and a national survey of school-based police officials reinforces the importance of ongoing staff training, evaluating security measures, and testing school crisis plans to protect schools, students, staff, and facilities” (Trump & Lavarello, 2003, p. 19).

Principal certification programs sometimes do not address school crises: natural disasters, shootings, suicide, and terminal illness (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1999). “Bender and Mclaughlin (1997) confirmed that teacher preparation and in-service have not kept up with national efforts to address school violence” (Graveline, 2003, p. 73). All personnel who deal with children should be trained: counselors, bus drivers, custodians, lunchroom staff, and secretaries (Young, Poland, & Griffin, 1996). Students should also be trained to respond quickly. Jon Campbell, assistant superintendent of the Etowah City Schools in Alabama said, “When you practice something you don’t have to think about it as much... You don’t want to be figuring out what to do when it’s happening” (“School Safety: Local”, 2006, p. 1). “The school crisis literature is clear that students are not going to do what you need them to do in a moment of crisis unless you have practiced it with them ...” (Poland, 1994, p.185). In addition, “a person’s perception of her ability to intervene may have a substantial impact on the final outcome of a crisis situation” (Graveline, 2003, p. 73).

“Bandura (1977) stated, ‘Given appropriate skills and adequate incentives, efficacy expectations are a major determinant of people’s choice of activities, how much effort they will expend, and how long they will sustain efforts in dealing with stressful situations’ (p. 194).” (Graveline, 2003, p. 73).

Al Brook School Principal Gary Friedlieb was impressed when Saginaw fire department intentionally pulled willing students during an emergency evacuation drill to see if their absence would be noticed. Teachers realized that there were missing persons immediately. “A coordinated district wide crisis response is no accident. It reflects prevention, intervention, and rehearsed reaction” (Lichtenstein, Schonfeld, & Kline, 1994, p. 80).

Administrative encouragement may be needed to motivate teachers to attend preparedness training (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004). Evon Lisle, a doctoral student at the University of Central Florida, developed a survey to help education officials focus on staff development training teachers perceived to be beneficial to help them with violence prevention. Leaders can analyze the results in this study and provide in service training desired by teachers (Lisle, 2002).

### *Prevention and Bullying*

The overarching point in this section is that prevention can stop crises from occurring. Bully prevention is very important because students who are bullied are at an increased risk of suicide, school dropout, and have a higher potential to retaliate by bringing a weapon to school. A key focus of school administration should be the process of better assimilating students who have been disciplined for a violent act or threat back into the school climate. School

officials in Omaha, NB are setting an example of assimilating students back into the classroom.

Omaha school officials also are paying attention to what happens when punished students are ready to return to school, recognizing that consideration has to be given to the target of a threat and to the safety and sense of security of other students. They also note the need to provide counseling or other intervention to keep the returning student on the right track (Stover, 2005, p.11).

State level and federal governments are working to prevent violence in the schools; many programs that help to combat violence in schools are available. Tom Ridge, former Secretary of Homeland Security, and Rodney Paige allocated \$30 million for programs in March, 2003. The program provided grant money for teacher staff training, coordination of crisis plans with local agencies, and coordination of recovery efforts with local health agencies (Black, 2004).

Other programs are being utilized nationwide to prevent violence. One such program is The Family and Childhood Education Program (FACE). FACE's focus is on teaching respect, humility, peace, love, truth, and wisdom. Fond du Lac Ojibwe School in Minnesota uses the program and reports an excellent response. The primary focus of the program is to "promote a healthy community through lifelong learning" (Gilderman, 2006, p. 2).

In the last decade, bullying has surfaced as one of the foremost non-violent means of student-to-student intimidation tactics on and off school campuses. After a violent attack on a school campus, the perpetrator or others

at the school report that the attacker was bullied by his or her targets. Bully prevention is one way teachers can help their students in the apex of Maslow's Hierarchy. Schools are implementing programs to prevent bullying. Esko Schools (MN) use Olwens Bullying Prevention Program. The program has reduced bullying, helped make a positive school climate, and reduced truancy and vandalism. They had a bully prevention month where students are involved in role play and the parents and community members became more alert and educated on bullying (Gilderman, 2006).

Cyberbullying is a new medium that can harm students 24 hours a day. People who are victims can become depressed, skip school, and show a decline in class work. A 13 year-old in Vermont hung himself after enduring months of cyberbullying. An estimated 20-40% of students in grades 5-12 have been victims of cyberbullying. It is more common than most educators realize. Parry Aftab, a New York attorney, states that off campus cyberbullying can spill over into the school like gang violence. Lizette Alexander, a Pasco County, FL, student services director states, "It is certainly within the preview of school officials to inform parents about a problem and offer mediation to resolve it" (Stover, 2006b, p. 40).

First Amendment rights to expression are issues about which principals are concerned, so when an occurrence of cyberbullying happens off-campus, many principals choose to take no actions. Principals are more likely to act when off-campus activity is criminal. However, some cyber bullies are facing criminal charges. An 18-year-old was charged "with harassment and second-degree

breach of the peace.” The Easthampton, New Yorker was arrested for allegedly threatening students on My Space (Stover, 2006b, p. 41).

It is important for students who are targets of bullying to speak out. Those who internalize the bullying are at a greater risk. Michael Dorn, author of *Weakfish*, stated that when a child does not speak about bullies, he or she has an increased risk of suicide, school dropout, and higher potential to retaliate by bringing a weapon to school (Defresne, 2005).

Teachers are becoming more educated about bullying. Aaron Fischer, ESKO superintendent in Cloquet, MN, states that in the past “bullying was more outward or displayed and teachers would pass it off as normal mischief, stating “kids will be kids.” Now, teachers are involved in bully prevention programs and trained to look at different types of behaviors associated with bullying and to get support for the victims and help for the bullies” (Gilderman, 2006, p. 2). “Less than one-third of teachers set aside time to talk about bullying and ways to prevent it or work with students to create classroom rules to prevent bullying.” Teachers should talk to bullies often and after offenses occur to deter bullying (Bucher & Manning, 2005, p. 58).

### Summary

“School violence, terrorism, and natural disasters are all crises that have the potential to affect school-aged children. With advanced planning, schools and communities can actively prepare to respond quickly to catastrophic events, and in many cases prevent them from ever happening” (Education Development Center, 2006, para. 1). As school administrators and leaders emerge from the

outdated notion that their respective schools are immune from violence or other incidents, their focus must shift to preventive measures and preparedness since teachers are on the front lines with students, they need to feel well-equipped to handle a school crisis. The process begins by identifying and analyzing their current perception of their ability to handle a crisis. It is up to the administration to create and foster teachers' confidence in handling a school crisis.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology for this study. It is organized in the following seven sections: (1) Research Questions and Hypotheses; (2) Research Design; (3) Participants; (4) Instrumentation; (5) Procedures; (6) Limitations; and (7) Data Analysis. This study examined teachers' perceptions of their ability to respond to a school crisis. Rural and urban school districts were compared. Finally, the study explored teachers' background knowledge in crisis planning and whether this knowledge and increased practice affects their self-efficacy. A survey conducted by Nims and Wilson (1998) of administrators and department heads at teacher education programs revealed that 44% of administrators "indicated that violence prevention is incorporated in existing courses. A little less than half the administrators believed that more needed to be done to prepare teachers in violence prevention" (p.2). No information in the literature was found about teachers' perceptions of principal's ability and attitude toward managing a crisis. There are few studies that research teachers' perception of their ability to react in a school crisis. The researcher found one small-scale qualitative study by Graveline (2003). Since teachers are the ones who spend most time with students, it seems important that teachers be properly trained and feel confident in their abilities to respond in a crisis situation (Graveline, 2003). The researcher found conflicting literature on the demographic location of schools and incidents of school violence. Historically,



school violence occurred in urban schools; however, recent reports show that rural schools are experiencing a spike in school violence (Public Agency Training Council, 2007).

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Do teachers have knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools?
2. Are emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness?
3. Is the level of regularity in practice of emergency response related to teachers' personal assessments of capably responding to a crisis?
4. Do teachers believe that they are adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis?
5. What are teachers' perceptions of their principals' ability to respond to crises?
6. What are teachers' perceptions of their principals as leaders who consider school crises as a viable event on their campus?
7. Is there a difference between teachers' perceptions of principal's attitude toward the viability of crisis events depending upon their schools' location in rural vs. urban areas and the safety of the school?

The research hypotheses were as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: No significant difference will be found between teachers' perceptions of their ability to handle a crisis and teachers' perceptions of their principal's ability to respond to a crisis.

H<sub>2</sub>: No significant difference will be found between urban and rural school districts teachers' perceptions concerning their ability to handle a crisis.

H<sub>3</sub>: No significant relationship will be found between the degree to which emergency response drills are routinely practiced and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy to handling crises.

### Research Design

The study utilized quantitative designs. Descriptive statistics were used to provide responses to research questions. In addition, the first hypothesis was tested using a correlational quantitative design. The second hypothesis was tested using a causal comparative design. The variables include teachers' perception of their ability to respond to a crisis, teachers' perceptions of their principal's ability to respond to crises, rural schools, and urban schools. The third hypothesis was tested using a causal comparative design.

### Participants

The sample was drawn from teachers who teach P-12<sup>th</sup> grade in the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Florida. A stratified random sampling method was used to select subjects from rural and urban school districts. All subjects were volunteers in the study, giving informed consent by returning the survey via mail.

## Instrumentation

The instrument utilized in this study was the Teachers in a Crisis: Preparedness Survey (TCPS), developed by the researcher. The TCPS was constructed using a 5-point likert scale. A panel of experts was consulted in the development of the questionnaire and in the refinement of the instrument. The panel of experts had experience in school crisis response, school violence, school safety, teaching, administration, and education training. This was the field test method the researcher utilizes to gain validity on the TCPS. A pilot study was conducted. In order to determine the instrument's validity and reliability among teachers, this pilot study was conducted with actual teachers after Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained. The instrument was refined again based on findings from the pilot.

The first section of the TCPS included demographic items such as age, gender, teaching experience, degree level, subject taught, school demographics, crime level, and economic status of students' parents. These items are listed as A-K.

The second section collected data on teachers' perceptions of their principal's ability to respond to crisis. There are 10 items, listed 1-10, outlined in the section entitled "What are teachers' perceptions of their principal's ability to respond to crisis?" The Cronbach's alpha for this section was .872.

The third section collected data on teachers' perceptions of their principal's attitude toward the likelihood of school crises. There are 9 items in

this section, and they are listed as items 11-19. The section is entitled “teachers’ perceptions of their principal’s attitude toward the likelihood of school crises.”

The Cronbach’s alpha for section three was .80.

The fourth section in the TCPS collected data on teachers’ knowledge of emergency procedures. There are 11 items in this section, labeled 20-30. It is titled “Do teachers have knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools?”

The Cronbach’s alpha for this section was .848.

The next section in the TCPS collected data on the practice of emergency procedures and drills. There are 8 items in this section, labeled as 31-38, under the heading “Are emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness?” The Cronbach’s alpha for this section was .796.

The last section in the TCPS collected data on teachers’ self-efficacy. There are four items in this section. The items, labeled 39- 42, come under the heading “Do teachers believe that they are adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis?” The Cronbach’s alpha for the last section was .793.

Items Q8, Q14, and Q42 were deleted to improve the Cronbach's alpha. After deleting item 8, the Cronbach’s alpha increased to .915, this item was included in sub-scale 1 “Teachers’ perceptions of their principal’s ability to respond to a crisis”. Deleting item 14 increased the Cronbach’s alpha to .800; this item was in Sub-scale 2 “Teacher perception of principal’s attitude toward the likelihood of school crises”. Deleting item 42 increased the Cronbach’s alpha to .851; this item was in Sub-scale 5 “Teachers adequately trained to respond”. No items were deleted from Sub-scale 3 “Teachers knowledge of emergency

procedures at their school”, nor Sub-scale 4 “Emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced”. The reliability statistic of the instrument was .796.

#### Procedures

After IRB approval was secured, one-thousand surveys were mailed to a regional sample of Preschool (P)-12 teachers in the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Florida. Subjects volunteered to participate (informed consent) by returning the questionnaires back in a stamped envelope provided by the researcher. The questionnaire was constructed using a 5-point likert scale.

#### Limitations

The study was conducted with the following limitations imposed by the researcher:

1. The results will be limited to the perceptions of teachers in the Southeastern United States.

#### Data Analysis

Descriptive data were used to answer the research questions. Hypothesis one was tested using a dependent t-test. Hypotheses two was tested with a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Hypothesis three was tested with a correlational test. The .05 level of significance was used.

#### Summary

“Educational Testing Service (Barton, Coley, & Wenglisky, 1998) indicated that students in safe schools are better performers, academically, than are students in unsafe environments. Violence, or even the perception of

violence, is a detraction from a conducive teaching and learning environment” (Hunt, 2001, p. 14). Teachers are charged with the task of teaching students and creating a safe school environment. All teachers and administrators regardless of school location should become diligent in preparing for crises. Bandura (1988) states that teacher’s self-efficacy is a strong determinant of how a person will react to a crises. “A person’s perception of her ability to intervene may have a substantial impact on the final outcome of a crisis situation” (Graveline, 2003, p. 73). Little research has been done in the area of teacher self-efficacy to respond to a crisis. This study is justified given this and the documented need for more effective training and safety planning. The planned methodology for the study was explored in this chapter, along with a detailed description of the TCPS instrument.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This section contains descriptive and statistical data analysis explaining the outcomes of hypotheses tests. This study was designed to explore teachers' perceptions of their ability to respond to a crisis. In March of 2008, the instrument, "Teachers in a Crisis: Preparedness Survey," was mailed to 1,000 teachers in the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee. One hundred surveys were mailed to urban school teachers in each state and to rural school teachers in each state. Schools in the following urban counties or cities were part of the sample: Mobile County and Birmingham city in Alabama; Hillsborough County and Miami city in Florida; Fulton and Gwinnett counties in Georgia; Jackson County and Gulfport city in Mississippi; and Memphis and Nashville cities in Tennessee. Surveys were also distributed in the following rural counties: Greene, Wilcox, Lowndes, and DeKalb counties in Alabama; Liberty, Lafayette, Calhoun, and Citrus counties in Florida; Echols, Glascock, and Harris counties in Georgia; Benton, Kemper, Sharkey, Issaquena, Walthall, Winston, Rankin, and Lowndes counties in Mississippi; and Claiborne, Clay, Giles, Seguatchie, and Van Buren counties in Tennessee.

Using a 5-point Likert scale, teachers provided responses to a series of statements. Of the 1,000 surveys mailed, 202 were returned. However, not all respondents completed every item; therefore, the sample size per item fluctuated. The following item illustrates the fluctuation. Item 1 states, "I am confident in my assistant principal(s) ability to handle a crisis." Many

respondents to this item, particularly those working in rural schools, reported that they do not have an assistant principal; therefore, they did not respond to the statement. Three administrators filled out the survey, and they were not included in the results.

### Descriptive Data

The first part of the instrument solicited demographic information from the teacher participants. There were 11 items regarding background information. The information included gender, subject taught, age, teaching experience, degree level, and years of teaching at current school. School demographic items addressed the population of school, type of school, perception of crime level, students' guardians economic status, and school locale (rural or urban) in which the teacher works.

Table 1 illustrates that 20.8% of the teachers surveyed were males, while 79.2% of teachers surveyed were females.

Table 1

#### *Demographic Data of Respondents' Gender*

	Frequency	Percent
Males	42	20.8
Females	160	79.2
Total	202	100.0

Table 2 illustrates the subjects taught by the sample population. The highest rate of return (31.2%) was among elementary teachers. The second



highest frequency was for the category "Other"; this includes all elective subjects (art, computer, auto body, health, physical education, etc.) Seven participants did not list subject taught.

Table 2

*Demographic Data of Subject Taught*

	Frequency	Percent
Math	21	10.4
English	22	10.9
Science	19	9.4
History	13	6.4
Elementary	63	31.2
Other	57	28.2
Total	195	96.5
Missing	7	3.5
Total	202	100.0

Table 3 displays the ages of teachers by category. Only twelve participants responded that they were 61 years of age or older. Most teachers responding to the survey were between the ages of 31 and 60.

Table 3

*Age Data*

	Frequency	Percent
20-30	21	10.4
31-40	63	31.2
41-50	52	25.7
51-60	49	24.3
61-older	12	5.9
Missing	5	2.5
Total	202	100.0

Table 4 illustrates the participants' years of experience in the education field. Thirty-one percent of teachers who participated in this study had been teaching between 11 and 20 years. Only 5% were first year teachers.

Table 4

*Teachers Experience Data*

	Frequency	Percent
1 <sup>st</sup> year	1	.5
2-3	11	5.4
4-5	14	6.9
6-10	51	25.2
11-20	64	31.7

20-above	59	28.9
Total	200	99.0
Missing	2	1.0
Total	202	100.0

---

Table 5 notes the education level of the subjects. The largest percentage of teachers (51.5%) had obtained their Master's degrees. Table 6 illustrates the number of years the teachers have been teaching at their current schools.

Table 5

*Level of Education Data*

	Frequency	Percent
Bachelors	56	27.7
Masters	104	51.5
Specialist	31	15.3
Doctoral	8	4.0
Other	2	1.0
Total	201	99.5
Missing	1	.5
Total	202	100.0

---

Table 3

*Age Data*

	Frequency	Percent
20-30	21	10.4
31-40	63	31.2
41-50	52	25.7
51-60	49	24.3
61-older	12	5.9
Missing	5	2.5
Total	202	100.0

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Total	202	100.0

---

Table 6

*Years at Current School*

	Frequency	Percent
1 <sup>st</sup> year	11	5.4
2-3	34	16.8
4-5	26	12.9
6-10	50	24.8
11-20	51	25.2
20-above	25	12.4
Total	197	97.5
Missing	5	2.5
Total	202	100.0

Tables 7 through 11 illustrate the type of school environment in which the teachers worked. Table 7 shows the number of students attending their schools. Table 8 shows the type of school; the largest percentage is public schools. Table 9 illustrates the teachers' perceptions of the type of crime level in the areas in which students live. Table 10 notes the teachers' perceptions of the economic status of the students' guardians. Table 11 illustrates the setting in which the schools were located; the highest percentage was rural at 56.4%.

Table 7

*School Population Data*

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 500	69	34.2
501-1000	88	43.6
1001-1500	25	12.4
1501-2000	15	7.4
2000-above	4	2.0
Total	201	99.5
Missing	1	.5
Total	202	100.0

Table 8

*School Type Data*

	Frequency	Percent
Public	192	95.0
Private	1	.5
Alternative	4	2.0
Magnet	5	2.5
Total	202	100.0

Table 9

*Crime in Area Data*

	Frequency	Percent
High Crime	12	5.9
Moderate	64	31.7
Low	123	60.9
Total	199	98.5
Missing	3	1.5
Total	202	100.0

Table 10

*Student Guardian Socioeconomic Data*

	Frequency	Percent
High	6	3.0
Middle	81	40.1
Low	96	47.5
Below Poverty	18	8.9
Total	201	99.5
Missing	1	.5
Total	202	100.0



Table 11

*Neighborhood Data*

	Frequency	Percent
Inner City	24	11.9
Rural	114	56.4
Suburban	36	17.8
Urban	22	10.9
Total	196	97.0
Missing	6	3.0
Total	202	100.0

Table 12 presents the mean and standard deviation for each of the 42 items on the instrument. Items were organized into sub-scales: Sub-scale (1) Teacher's perceptions of principal's ability to respond to a crisis; Sub-scale (2) Teacher's perceptions of principal's attitude toward the likelihood of school crises; Sub-scale (3) Teachers knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools; Sub-scale (4) Emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced; and Sub-scale (5) Teachers adequately trained to respond. Inspection reveals that item R18, "I have considered changing careers due to crisis unpreparedness at my school" had a high mean (4.46), revealing few teachers have considered leaving the education field. Item 15 "The administration at my school offers incentives to promote crisis preparedness training" had the lowest mean (2.24).

Table 12

*Means and Standard Deviations for TCPS Instrument*

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Sub-scale 1 Teachers' Perceptions of administrators' ability to respond to a crisis</b>	202	1.0	5.0	3.73	.85
1 I am confident in my assistant principal(s) ability to handle a crisis.	189	1	5	4.07	1.0
Q2 The head principal at my school is fully aware of the training needs of teachers regarding school violence.	202	1	5	4.05	.96
Q3 I am confident in my head principal's ability to handle a crisis.	200	1	5	4.19	.99
Q4 My school currently has a school crisis team.	201	1	5	3.41	1.14
Q5 The school crisis team implements critical components of teacher training to manage a	200	1	5	3.41	1.14

school crisis.

Q6 The head principal at my 202 1 5 3.96 .97

school feels it is important that  
teachers are properly trained to  
handle a school crisis.

Q7 I have many learning 202 1 5 3.36 1.09

resources available to me at my  
school if I want to learn more  
about crisis preparedness.

Q9 A teacher in-service is 202 1 5 3.13 1.30

provided at least once a year to  
train teachers how to respond in  
the event of a crisis.

Q10 My school has strong 202 1 5 3.66 1.14

administrative leadership in  
school crisis preparedness.

**Sub-scale 2 Teachers'** 202 1.63 5.00 3.80 .63

**perceptions of their  
principal's attitude toward the  
likelihood of school crises**

R11 My head principal doesn't 202 1.0 5.0 4.01 .88

believe a shooting incident could  
happen here.

R12 My head principal doesn't believe a terrorist attack could happen here.	202	1.0	5.0	3.76	1.01
R13 My head principal doesn't believe a natural disaster could happen here.	202	2.0	5.0	4.37	.68
Q15 The administration at my school offers incentives to promote crisis preparedness training.	202	1	5	2.24	.91
Q16 The principal is supportive of teachers regarding consequences delivered to students who show violence/disruptive behaviors in their classrooms.	200	1	5	4.03	1.08
Q17 One of my principal's strongest attributes is leadership concerning student discipline.	202	1	5	3.69	1.25
R18 I have considered changing careers due to crisis unpreparedness at my school.	200	1.0	5.0	4.46	.84
Q19 Administration involves	201	1	5	3.86	1.05

police, emergency responders  
and other outside agencies in  
safety planning.

<b>Sub-scale 3 Teachers'</b>	202	1.09	5.00	3.56	.66
<b>knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools</b>					
Q20 There is a written plan in place for dealing with an armed intruder.	202	1	5	4.24	.88
Q21 There is written plan in place for dealing with a terrorist attack.	200	1	5	3.74	1.15
Q22 There is a written plan in place for dealing with a natural disaster.	201	1	5	4.33	.79
Q23 There is a written plan in place for dealing with a hostage situation.	200	1	5	3.98	1.05
Q24 A crisis occurred on the campus where you are employed.	202	1	5	2.44	1.41
Q25 I became adequately trained prior to the crisis.	191	1	5	3.09	1.12

Q26 A Crisis resulted in the foundation for implementing an effective crisis plan.	194	1	5	2.37	1.04
Q27 When a crisis has occurred, the incident response was discussed and evaluated by faculty and staff members.	193	1	5	3.30	1.10
Q28 I am familiar with the crisis protocol for an armed intruder.	202	1	5	4.01	1.00
Q29 I am familiar with the crisis protocol for natural disasters.	202	1	5	4.15	.87
Q30 I am familiar with the crisis protocol for terrorist attacks.	201	1	5	3.52	1.22
<b>Sub-scale 4 Emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced</b>	202	1.38	5.0	3.64	.73
Q31 Lockdown drills are practiced, at least twice per school year, for armed intruders at my school.	202	1	5	3.50	1.39
Q32 Lockdown drills are practiced because of legal mandates at my school.	201	1	5	3.35	1.27

Q33 Lockdown drills are practice often for hostage situations at my school.	200	1	5	2.80	1.31
Q34 Evacuation drills for fire are practiced in regulation with fire codes.	202	1	5	4.54	.72
Q35 I have been exposed to crisis plans and procedures at my school.	201	1	5	4.22	.89
Q36 I possess knowledge of school violence prevention.	202	1	5	3.92	1.01
Q37 I know where to relocate in the event of a natural disaster.	202	1	5	4.19	1.04
Q38 I have been trained in techniques in verbal communication strategies to calm an aggressive person.	202	1	5	2.65	1.33
<b>Sub-scale 5 Teachers adequately trained to respond</b>	202	1.0	5.0	2.66	1.13
Q39 I have received training in the last 12 months in first aide.	202	1	5	2.49	1.39
Q40 I have received training in the last 12 months in CPR	202	1	5	2.42	1.38

Q41 I am well trained to manage 202 1 5 3.08 1.09  
a crisis situation at my school.

---

### Tests of Hypotheses

This section addresses the tests of the study's hypotheses. A t-test was utilized to test hypothesis 1, a one-way ANOVA was used to test hypothesis 2, and a correlational test was used to test hypothesis 3. Each hypothesis is restated and data are provided to communicate the results.

#### Test of Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis was stated as follows: No significant difference will be found between teachers' perceptions of their ability to handle a crisis and teachers' perceptions of their principal's ability to respond to a crisis. Composite data from items 1-10 were compared to composite data from items 39-41. Table 13 shows the means and standard deviations for the t-test. The data indicated that Hypothesis 1 should be rejected  $t(201) = 13.31, p < .001$ . Teachers are more confident in their principal's ability to manage crises than their own ability.

#### Table 13

##### *Test of Hypothesis 1*

	Mean	Std Deviation
Teachers' perceptions of principal's ability to respond to a crisis	3.73	.85



Teachers adequately trained to respond	2.66	1.13
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Scale: 1 = Low, 2 = Medium low, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Medium high, 5 = High

*Test of Hypothesis 2*

The second hypothesis was stated as follows: No significant difference will be found between urban and rural school districts teachers' perceptions concerning their ability to handle a crisis. The data in table 14 were used to test Hypothesis 2. These data provide a basis for accepting this hypothesis  $F(33,192) = 1.523, p = .210$ . Therefore, there was not a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of preparedness based upon locale.

Table 14

*Test of Hypothesis 2*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inner City	24	2.88	1.26
Rural	114	2.56	1.11
Suburban	36	2.92	1.08
Urban	22	2.45	1.13
Total	196	2.65	1.13

---

Scale: 1 = Low, 2 = Medium low, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Medium high, 5 = High

*Test of Hypothesis 3*

The third hypothesis was stated as follows: No significant relationship will be found between the degree to which emergency response drills are routinely practiced and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy related to handling crises.

Analysis of the data in the table 15 reveal that the hypothesis was rejected  $t(201) = 13.636, p < .001$ . Teachers reported that the emergency procedures/drills were being routinely practiced; however, they still did not believe that they were adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis.

Table 15

*Test of Hypothesis 3*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced	3.64	202	.737
Teachers adequately trained to respond	2.66	202	1.13

Scale: 1 = Low, 2 = Medium low, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Medium high, 5 = High

Post Hoc Analysis

A post hoc analysis was preformed to reveal additional findings. A t-test, based on gender, was conducted to note if teachers think they are well trained to manage a crisis situation at their school. Table 16 illustrates the different means of males and females based on item 41 in the survey instrument,  $t(200) = 4.03, p < .001$ . A significant difference was found between genders. Specifically, men rated themselves higher with respect to the belief that they are well trained to manage crises. However, neither gender rated their capacity to handle crises as high.

Table 16

*Post Hoc Analysis of Gender*

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q41	Male	3.67	1.00
	Female	2.93	1.06

A Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient Rho revealed a small but significant correlation between the number of years teaching and the perception of being well trained to manage a crisis situation at school (Q41). That Spearman Rohm ( $r=.150$ ,  $p=.034$ ) illustrates that the more years a teacher spends in education (item D) the stronger his or her perception of being well trained to manage a crisis (Q41). No significant correlation was found between years at current school (item F) and teachers' perception of being well trained to manage a crisis situation at school (Q41) ( $r=-.052$ ,  $p=.470$ ).

## Summary

In this chapter, descriptive and statistical data analyses were presented and the outcomes of hypotheses testing were presented. In addition, a post hoc analysis was included. This data included gender, subject taught, age, teaching experience, degree level, years of teaching at current school, population of school, type of school, perception of crime level, students' guardians economic status, and (rural or urban) setting of the school in which the teacher works. An analysis of the data from the survey instruments and testing of the hypotheses indicated that teachers do not think they are adequately trained to respond

competently to a crisis. Teachers are more confident in their principal's ability to respond to a crisis, and no difference was found between rural and urban teachers regarding their perceptions of managing a crisis situation at their school. In addition, teachers reported that an average amount of practice drills are being performed. Fire drills are an exception because they are practiced more routinely; however, teacher confidence in their ability to manage a crisis was not improved. The post hoc analysis revealed a small but significant correlation in years of teaching experience increasing confidence in teachers' perceptions of being well trained to handle a crisis. In addition, males rated themselves higher than females rated themselves with respect to the perception of being adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis. The next chapter presents a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, limitations, recommendations to improve existing practices, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study and the ideas and experiences of the researcher. Furthermore, the conclusions and recommendations based on analysis of the data and relevant research are addressed. Limitations of the study results and recommendations for policies and practices to enhance school safety are reported. Recommendations for future research based on the data from this study are listed.

#### Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine school safety from teachers' perceptions, particularly noting their self-efficacy to deal with crises – whether the catastrophic event is an act of terrorism, natural disaster, or school violence. As was noted in Chapter I, teachers are often in charge of classrooms full of students when an act of violence, terror, or natural disaster occurs. Therefore, this study was justified by the dearth of literature regarding teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy to deal with crises. The researcher's hypotheses focused on teachers' perceptions of their personal capabilities, their crisis response training, their perceptions of administrators' capabilities to handle a crisis, and their school's physical and demographic setting.

As quoted in chapter II, "School violence, terrorism, and natural disasters are all crises that have the potential to affect school-aged children, With advanced planning, schools and communities can actively prepare to respond quickly to catastrophic events, and in many cases prevent them from ever

happening” (Education Development Center, 2006, para. 1). Based upon an examination of the literature and the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that teachers need to be confident that they are trained to handle a school crisis. The process begins by identifying and analyzing teachers’ perceptions of their ability to handle emergencies. This was the main objective of this study.

Data were collected on teachers’ knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools and whether emergency procedures/drills were routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness. Teachers also indicated whether they are adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis. Data regarding teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ ability to respond to crises, along with teachers’ perceptions of their principals as leaders who consider school crises as a viable event were also collected.

### Conclusions and Discussion

This study is a foundation for additional research on teachers’ perceptions. As previously noted, there is a dearth of literature on teachers’ perceptions about their ability to handle a crisis. The following paragraphs discuss descriptive data from teachers’ responses; the paragraphs also address the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

Teachers who returned the surveys indicated more confidence in their principal’s ability to handle crises than in their personal abilities; however, neither confidence level was high. When exploring individual items in Sub-scale 1 “What are teachers’ perceptions of their administrators’ ability to respond to

crisis?" the researcher found interesting results. The first items on the survey asked if teachers are confident in their head and assistant principal(s) ability to handle a crisis which addresses research question 5 in this study, "What are teachers' perceptions of their principals' ability to respond to crises?" The mean for these first items on the survey were in the "agree" range of the 5-point Likert scale. The highest range was strongly agree, the lowest strongly disagree, with neutral in the middle. A few items down the survey, item 4 states, "My school currently has a school crisis team." Teachers' responses to item 4 yielded a mean between neutral and agree. This is not in agreement with current literature that school crisis team are imperative to sound safety planning at a school (Gallagherr, Bagin, & Moore, 2005). Item 5, "The school crisis team implements critical components of teacher training to manage a school crisis," received even lower marks which created a lower mean than item 4. Item 9, "A teacher in-service is provided at least once a year to train teachers how to respond in the event of a crisis," had the lowest mean of any item in the first sub-scale.

Based on this research, it appears that teachers do not believe they are adequately trained to respond competently to crises. According to Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, mastery of experiences is the most effective way to build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). According to the research results of this study, teachers are not receiving the practice needed for successful mastery of safety planning skills nor are they provided the learning resources available to them at their schools to perceive themselves capable to manage a crisis. Item 7, "I have many learning resources available to me at my school if I want to learn more

about crisis preparedness,” received a neutral ranking by teachers. It is important for administrators’ job to lead teachers and insure they receive the in-service training to perform crises interventions. The encouragement of administrators may be needed to motivate teachers to attend preparedness training (Pfefferbaum et al., 2004). During a training session provided by Kenneth Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, one administrator pointed to his head and stated, “I’m not worried about having a crisis plan in my school – I have it all here” (Tonn, 2005, p.3). However, it doesn’t matter how prepared an administrator feels if the preparedness plan is not communicated to school personnel. Lack of a safety plan or a written plan that is not read or practiced may prove useless when a crisis strikes. According to Graveline, (2003):

Experts have warned that without trained faculty, crisis plans are not effective (American Society of Safety Engineers Foundation, 2000; Bender & McLaughlin, 1997; Callahan, 1998; Hull 2000; Mississippi Department of Education, 1998; Myles & Simpson, 1994; National Education Association, 2000; Raudenbush, 1990; 2000; Small & Terrick, 2001; Stephen, 1994; Taylor & Hawkins, Trump, 1999; White & Beal, 1999). (p. 69)

Sub-scale 2, which addressed “Teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ attitude toward the likelihood of school crises,” also yielded interesting results. The first three items in Sub-scale 2 refer to teachers’ perceptions of the head principal acknowledging an awareness of potential crises occurring. Teachers are in agreement that their principals believe a natural disaster could happen at



their schools. This item (R13) had the highest mean of the three items, an understandable rating considering the hardships thrust upon schools by recent natural disasters (Evans & Oehler-Stinnett, 2006; Jervis, 2007; Trotter, 2005; & UNESCO, 2007). Teachers also agree that their principals believe that a shooting incident could occur at their school; this item had a mean of 4.01. Again, this is understandable given the increased focus on school violence. A string of violent acts at schools prompted a White House conference in October 2006, convened to develop safety guides for schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The item which is most alarming is item (R12) which yielded the lowest mean of the three items. This item states, "My head principal doesn't believe a terrorist attack could happen here." Responses to this item confirm that the same lack of caution that was prevalent among many airline security entities before 9/11 can also be seen among school leaders. Yet there is evidence of the potential for terrorist attacks on schools. Information on American school buildings information and school safety plans was confiscated during a raid in Iraq (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention & U.S. Department of Education, 2004); American schools are targets for terrorist attacks (Grossman & Degaetano, 1999). Considering this research and information provided in the literature review, the researcher predicts a terrorist attack will be attempted at an American school. Unfortunately, teachers may not be prepared and administrators, in many instances do not see a terrorist attack as a threat, per teachers' perceptions.

As stated in chapter IV item 15, "The administration at my school offers incentives to promote crisis preparedness training," had the lowest mean, suggesting that administrators are not providing enticements to promote greater attention to emergency preparedness among teachers. Teachers' also ranked principals low on item 17, "One of my principal's strongest attributes is leadership concerning student discipline." Teachers responded neutrally on item 19, showing that the school administration, on average, does not involve police, emergency responders, and other outside agencies in safety planning. Involving these outside professionals in safety planning is important because they are the safety experts (Grossman & Degaetano, 1999; Public Agency Training Council, 2007; & Trump, 1999), According to this study, school administrators are working collaboratively with other agencies about half of the time.

Item 16 in Sub-scale 2 states, "The principal is supportive of teachers regarding consequences delivered to students who show violent/disruptive behaviors in their classrooms." Teachers agree that principals are supportive of the consequences delivered to students in their classrooms. This is in contradiction to the literature presented by Portner (1995), who reported that teachers often do not feel vindicated by the punishments meted out by the administration and school districts. In addition, recent literature reveals a problem with administrators under-reporting students' violent acts. School Resource Officers (SROs) assert that administrators have the opportunity to manipulate reporting by not choosing to investigate possible incidents and by not

including SROs when they should (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006; Carr, 2007; Hevesi, 2006; & Karlin, 2007).

In summary regarding Sub-scale 2, respondents agreed that their principals exhibited a belief in the viability of a crisis on their campuses, with the exception of terrorism. Aside from the apparent lack of concern over terrorism, and problems suggested by responses to some additional items in the sub-scale, the balance of these findings are encouraging with respect to safety on school campuses. As stated in chapter I, leaders in school systems across the country must emerge from the false, pervasive mindset of immunity from violence to embrace awareness of the potential for crises. The results of the individual items are interesting and can perhaps provide insight for administrators. Hypothesis 1 utilized results from Sub-Scale 1, Sub-scale 2, and Sub-Scale 5.

Hypothesis 1 addressed teachers' perceptions of their principal's ability to respond to a crisis and their own ability to respond. Teachers rated principal's ability higher than their own, indicating more confidence in their principal's ability to respond than in their own. These findings are not surprising, in that principals are in leadership positions and teachers think their administrators have been trained to lead. However, while teachers may be more confident of the principal than themselves, they are not entirely confident of him/her either. Schools need to be safe, and teachers aren't sure of their ability to manage a crisis and, on average, only marginally more confident of their principals.

Findings in Sub-scale 3 of the survey, entitled "Do teachers have knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools?" and Sub-scale 4 entitled

“Are emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness?” support the literature of Paul Mendofik (Public Agency Training Council, 2007). Mendofik stated that teachers who routinely practice drills and crises protocols are more prepared for emergencies. He also stated that schools practice drills for fire because of state mandates and practice other type emergency drills less. At Mendofik’s 2007 workshop in Birmingham, Alabama, he stated, “Nobody has died in a school fire in the past three years.” The study validates this statement. The largest number of respondents/participants were in agreement that they practiced routine fire drills. This is a mandate. However, lockdowns and other safety procedures are not routinely practiced or mandated; this demonstrates there is a correlation between routine practice and fostering confidence in responding. More teachers indicated knowledge of the crisis protocol for natural disasters (Q 29) than those for armed intruders (Q 28). Even fewer knew the crisis protocol for a terrorist attack (Q 30). The results also indicate that in the aftermath of a crisis, incidents are discussed and evaluated by faculty and staff members only about half of the time (Q 27). The above sub-scale addressed research question 1, “Do teachers have knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools?”

Under Sub-scale 4, “Are emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness?” similar results were found. According to Mendofik, Public Agency Training Council, (2007) more than 300 deaths caused by violence occurred on school campuses in the last four years. No deaths occurred on school campuses due to fire. Mendofik attributed this to mandated

fire drills. Responses to item 34, "Evacuation drills for fire are practiced in regulation with fire codes" produced the largest mean of any item in the entire survey, which is consistent with Mendofik's conclusions. However, fewer teachers reported that lockdown drills were practiced twice a year for an armed intruder (Q 31), and even fewer teachers responded that drills were often practiced for a hostage situation (Q 33).

Sub-scale 5, entitled "Do teachers believe that they are adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis?" was utilized in the test of hypotheses 3. This Sub-scale also addressed research question 4, "Do teachers believe that they are adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis?" Overall, this research indicates that teachers do not believe that they are well trained to handle a crisis situation at their schools. Although no studies have been done, to the researchers knowledge, on teachers' perceptions of preparedness based on emergency drill practice, the findings of perceived teacher self-efficacy supports the research done by Pfefferbaum (2004) after the 9/11 attacks. Pfefferbaum's study revealed that teachers' feelings of preparedness and self confidence decreased from a high of 45% prior to 9/11 to 16% at the end of that school year.

Sub-scale 4 addressed research question 2, "Are emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness?" and research question 3 is addressed in hypothesis 3. Research question 3 states, "Is the level of regularity in practice of emergency response related to teachers' personal assessments of capably responding to a crisis?" Sub-scale 4 and Sub-scale 5 were utilized to address Hypothesis 3 which stated that "No

significant relationship will be found between the degree to which emergency response drills are routinely practiced and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy related to handling crises." This was rejected based on teacher data, which was surprising. According to Bandura (1994) self-efficacy can be strengthened with practice. Teachers report they are doing practice drills for crises; however, they still do not appear to believe that they are adequately trained.

This research suggests that it is important to look at individual schools and districts for training of personnel. The following is a note written on a returned survey. Teacher respondent 68, whose survey was postmarked from Florida, wrote, "The real deal is: My school takes the students and faculty through the motions of only a fire drill, a lockdown twice, but never any other emergency. We do this to comply with the rules set forth by the district and state mandates." Other districts and schools have well planned emergency responses. Dr. Virginia Gilbert, a panel of experts participant in this study and also a Florida resident wrote that an inmate escaped from a prison located close to her school. The middle and high school buses had already left for the day. It was time for the primary school to dismiss. The primary school held the students, with the direction of the Sheriff's Dept. from 3:30 (normal dismissal time) until after 5 p.m. They notified parents via their "automated call out system." When they did dismiss students, sheriff's deputies accompanied the school buses. When Dr. Gilbert got home, she had five messages on her answering machine notifying her of the schools proactive actions to protect the students. She was pleased that they had enacted a plan to keep the students safe. Because the researcher

worked in this district for three years, her personal experience suggests this plan was not developed the day of the crisis. This district has effective safety plans which are practiced routinely.

Hypothesis 2 states, "No significant difference will be found between urban and rural school districts teachers' perceptions concerning their ability to handle a crisis". No significant difference was found between the responses from urban and rural teachers. Much of the past literature designates urban areas as places where violence has been a more prevalent element of everyday life (Bennett-Johnson, 2004; Smith & Smith, 2006). Current evidence shows that school shootings and natural disasters can occur anywhere (Borja, 2005; Kennedy, 1999; & "Tornado Destroys – Enterprise Rebuilds,"2007). Experts in the field conclude that teachers in all locales need to be prepared for disaster (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006; State of Alabama Department of Education & Alabama Department of Public Health, 2008; & Trump, 2007). This foundational study revealed that both rural and urban teachers are uncertain about their abilities to respond to crises. No location category in this study reached a mean of 3. Rural teachers had a mean of 2.56, and urban teachers had a mean of only 2.45. Sub-scale 5 and item (K) in TPCS was used to test this hypothesis.

A post-hoc analysis revealed that males were more confident than females in their training to manage a crisis situation at their school. Again, both males and females were uncertain of their ability. The mean score for males on (Q41), "I am well trained to manage a crisis situation at my school," was a 3.67, and the mean score for females on the same item was a 2.93. Additional post-hoc

analysis showed (a small but significant correlation) that the more years teaching experience, the higher their rating that they are well trained to manage a crisis situation.

### Limitations

For the purposes of the study, the limitations include the following:

1. The study applies only to teachers in five southeastern states.
2. Teachers working in high crime areas may have yielded different results; only 12 teachers reported they worked in a high crime area.
3. The teachers in this study worked in public schools.
4. The response rate was 20 percent of the target population; this may affect generalization of results.

### Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The following recommendations were based on the findings of this study and current literature on effective practices associated with school safety. As mentioned throughout this research, there is a dearth of literature on teachers' perceptions of their ability to handle a crisis. This study is a starting point for future research on this topic and will serve as a revelation to school principals that more measures need to be taken to help teachers prepare for crises. The following recommendations for policy and practice are therefore proposed:

1. School leaders should routinely survey teachers to assess their safety needs and to pinpoint training activities would help them feel adequately trained to respond in a crisis.



2. It is essential that principals provide in-services experiences to explain crisis protocols at every school, regardless of size and locale.
3. Drills for terrorism, hostage situations, and armed intruders should be practiced as consistently as drills for fire.
4. Mandates regarding the practice of lockdown drills for armed intruders similar to fire drill mandates, should be adopted by legislatures.
5. Colleges and universities should update the curriculum in teacher and administrative leadership programs to teach effective practices concerning responses to natural disaster, terrorism, and school violence.

Based on this study, teachers do not feel adequately trained to handle a crisis at their schools. The first recommendation suggests that principals survey their teachers to find out what training is needed and in what areas they are lacking knowledge. Post crises debriefing and post emergency drill briefing would be beneficial at the schools. Only half of the teachers reported that after a crisis has occurred, the incident response was discussed and evaluated by faculty and staff members. Testing of the second hypothesis revealed that both rural and urban teachers are uncertain that they are adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis. In-services should be preformed twice a year to ensure all staff understands what they are to do in the event of an emergency. Recommendation 2 is based on the result of item (Q9), "A teacher in-service is provided at least once a year to train teachers how to respond in the event of a crisis." The results on this item indicate that about half of the teachers are

receiving in-services at least one per year. The third and fourth recommendations are based on the results of Sub-scale 4 “Are emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness?” and the current literature. Teachers report they know what to do in the event of a fire. They are uncertain about what to do if a hostage situation occurs. All drills should be legal mandates, not just fire drills. The last recommendation for policy and curriculum change is based on results from Smith-Greer 2001, which revealed that neither teachers nor administrators receive a lot of training on school violence. Furthermore, administrators didn’t fare so well in teacher ratings in this study. It is the administrators’ responsibility to ensure that teachers are provided with the learning opportunities at their schools to be well trained to handle a crisis. Updating the curriculum in college programs to include school safety measures would provide opportunities for current administrators and teachers, as well as future administrators and teachers, to develop an awareness of safety protocol.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Conclusions drawn from the original protocol for this study revealed additional avenues of inquiry. In addition, several interesting and unanticipated findings arose in post-hoc analysis testing; these findings warrant deeper analysis, and are not in the scope of this research. The following recommendations for future research are therefore proposed:

1. Further research regarding teachers' perceptions of school safety should be conducted in other regions of the U.S., not just in southeastern U.S.
2. Future research should be done on how to improve beginning teachers' confidence in responding to crises. A small positive correlation was found between total number of years of teaching and level of confidence in ability to respond to a crisis in the post-hoc analysis.
3. Post-hoc analysis also revealed that male teachers had a higher mean than female teachers on item 41. Item 41 states, "I am well trained to manage a crisis situation at my school." Future research could explore this difference in mean responses by analyzing the degree to which it is merely a product of perceptions of preparedness based on gender or whether actual differences exist between the nature of training and roles with which men and women are involved.
4. A meta-analysis of emergency training programs in different states is warranted. Pre-test and post-test protocols could be conducted for teachers after an emergency training program to note if this improves understanding and perceptions of their ability to manage a crisis.
5. Further research regarding professors' perceptions of school safety should be conducted at colleges and universities to explore perceptions of preparedness on college campuses.

According to Trump and Lavarello (2003), "Whether the crisis involves violence, terrorism, or natural disaster, the lesson remains the same: plan,

prepare, and practice” (p.20). The fourth recommendation for future research is a pre and post test research protocol on teachers’ perceptions before and after a teaching in-service on crisis preparedness. Based on this research, in-services programs on safety and resources at schools are lacking. Overall, teachers do not perceive themselves as prepared; ways to improve their preparedness to manage a crisis is very important and warrants further research.

Several unanticipated findings arose from the post-hoc analysis that would be interesting to study. First, an interesting point is that males having higher perceptions than females regarding their ability to manage crisis. The specific differences between males and females were not included within the scope of this study; however, the male respondents were in the same types of schools as the female respondents. The second interesting finding is that teachers who have been teaching longer perceive themselves as more prepared. This warrants deeper analysis. Do experienced teachers have this perception based on their familiarity with their physical surroundings, their familiarity with the school leadership, or is it their exposure to practice drills and in-services? More research needs to be done on these topics. The last recommendation for future research suggest doing a similar study in a college setting, this study focused on P-12 grade levels. The ultimate goal is to help teachers become more prepared to handle a disaster.

### Summary

In 2003, Graveline wrote, “There have even been many investigations of students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of the prevalence, type and

causes of school violence; yet, to date, there has been no investigation of teachers' perceptions of their ability to execute intervention strategies (Astor & Behre, 1997, 1998, Behre et al., 2001; Lockwood, 1997, Pietrzak et al., 1998; Schubarth, 2000)" (p. 69). This study explored teachers' perceived self-efficacy and teachers' perceptions of their principals' ability to respond to crises. This study provides implications for more effective school safety practices and a foundation for future study on teachers' perceptions. According to this study, teachers do not view themselves as prepared to manage crises, and it is unethical for principals not to help them become prepared.

The National Education Association published an article recently on assessing the threat of student violence, noting the problems of under-reporting and climate control which were addressed in this study's literature review (Walker, 2008). Since this article was published the Alabama Education Association offered workshops to administrators on school violence and self defense (Alabama Education Association, 2008). In addition, the Alabama State Department of Education worked collaboratively with the Alabama Department of Public Health to provide school disaster response training opportunities for those who work with school children (State of Alabama Department of Education & Alabama Department of Public Health, 2008). This type of proactive response is required if teachers and administrators are to become adequately prepared for disasters. According to Adams and Kritsonis (2006), school personnel should not focus on whether a school safety crisis may occur, but when it will occur. "Failure to consider the possibility of a crisis event occurring does not exempt

anyone from the possibility of a crisis occurring on their campuses” (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 2). According to Trump (1999), “On a day-to-day basis, schools will always have initiatives that seem more pressing, but on the day that violence strikes everything else will be completely inconsequential” (p.15).

## APPENDIX A



# THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147  
 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001  
 Tel: 601.266.6820  
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## HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.  
 Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 28021803

PROJECT TITLE: **The Role of Teachers in School Safety**

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 01/01/05 to 06/12/08

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Leslie Lee Brown**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership & Research**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **02/25/08 to 02/24/09**

*Lawrence A. Hosman*

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.  
 HSPRC Chair

*2-26-2008*

Date

## APPENDIX B

March 19, 2008

Dear Professional Educator:

School safety is one of the most important issues in our schools today. I am a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi, currently conducting a study to complete my dissertation on school safety.

As a teacher you play an integral role in establishing and maintaining a safe school environment. When a crisis arises, you will be called upon to respond. Teachers' perceptions of their capabilities and preparedness in responding to a crisis is the heart of my research. Therefore, I'm asking you to voluntarily take 10 minutes to respond to the survey. This survey, along with those of approximately 1,000 others, will be computed to determine just how prepared our teachers feel in responding to an act of violence or other catastrophic event on the school campus. The surveys are anonymous.

After you have completed the survey, please return the survey in the prepaid stamped addressed envelope enclosed. If you have any questions about the results of this research or would like to ask questions, contact me at (256) 572-6752. This survey is completely voluntary, and you may chose to discontinue taking the survey at any time. As a fellow educator I understand how precious your time is, and I appreciate your willingness to contribute to this research on such an important issue.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406, (601) 266-6820.

Respectfully Yours,



Leslie Brown

P.S. I'm hoping you will be willing to complete the survey and mail it back to me (postmarked) by April 11, 2008.



APPENDIX C

*Teachers in a Crisis: Preparedness Survey*

- A) Gender \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Male
- B) Subject Taught \_\_\_\_\_
- C) Age Category \_\_\_ 20-30 \_\_\_ 31-40 \_\_\_ 41-50 \_\_\_ 51-60 \_\_\_ 61 or older
- D) Number of years teaching \_\_\_ 1st year \_\_\_ 2-3 \_\_\_ 4-5 \_\_\_ 6-10 \_\_\_ 11-20 \_\_\_ 20 or more
- E) Degree Level \_\_\_ Bachelor's degree \_\_\_ Master's degree \_\_\_ Specialist's degree \_\_\_ Doctorate degree \_\_\_ Other
- F) Number of years at current school \_\_\_ 1st year \_\_\_ 2-3 \_\_\_ 4-5 \_\_\_ 6-10 \_\_\_ 11-20 \_\_\_ 20 or more
- G) Which category describes the student population of your school?
  - \_\_\_ Less than 500 students
  - \_\_\_ 500 to 1000 students
  - \_\_\_ 1000 to 1500 students
  - \_\_\_ 1500 to 2000 students
  - \_\_\_ 2000 or more students
- H) What type of school best describes your school?
  - \_\_\_ Public
  - \_\_\_ Charter
  - \_\_\_ Private
  - \_\_\_ Alternative
  - \_\_\_ Magnet
  - \_\_\_ Other: Define \_\_\_\_\_
- I) What type of area do the students live in that attend your school?
  - \_\_\_ High level of crime
  - \_\_\_ Moderate level of crime
  - \_\_\_ Low level of crime
- J) Which of the following most accurately describes the economic status of the students' guardians?
  - \_\_\_ High
  - \_\_\_ Middle
  - \_\_\_ Low
  - \_\_\_ Below poverty line
- K) What setting describes your school?
  - \_\_\_ Inner city \_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_ Urban

<b>What are teachers' perceptions of their administrators' ability to respond to crisis?</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am confident in my assistant principal(s) ability to handle a crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The head principal at my school is fully aware of the training needs of teachers regarding school violence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I am confident in my head principal's ability to handle a crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. My school currently has a school crisis team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The school crisis team implements critical components of teacher training to manage a school crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The head principal at my school feels it is important that teachers are properly trained to handle a school crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. I have many learning resources available to me at my school if I want to learn more about crisis preparedness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Reporting of violent acts (fighting, verbal confrontations, etc...) is discouraged by my school's administrators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. A teacher in-service is provided at least once a year to train teachers how to respond in the event of a crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. My school has strong administrative leadership in school crisis preparedness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Teachers' perceptions of their principal's attitude toward the likelihood of school crises?</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. My head principal doesn't believe a shooting incident could happen here.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. My head principal doesn't believe a terrorist attack could happen here.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My head principal doesn't believe a natural disaster could happen here.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I feel more in-service training should be provided at my school to deal with school emergencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. The administration at my school offers incentives to promote crisis preparedness training.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. The principal is supportive of teachers regarding consequences delivered to students who show violence/disruptive behaviors in their classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. One of my principal's strongest attributes is leadership concerning student discipline.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I have considered changing careers due to crisis unpreparedness at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Administration involves police, emergency responders and other outside agencies in safety planning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Do teachers have knowledge of emergency procedures at their schools?</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. There is a written plan in place for dealing with an armed intruder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. There is a written plan in place for dealing with a terrorist attack.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. There is a written plan in place for dealing with a natural disaster.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. There is a written plan in place for dealing with a hostage situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. A crisis occurred on the campus where you are employed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I became adequately trained prior to the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

26. A crisis resulted in the foundation for implementing an effective crisis plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. When a crisis has occurred, the incident response was discussed and evaluated by faculty and staff members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. I am familiar with the crisis protocol for an armed intruder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. I am familiar with the crisis protocol for natural disasters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. I am familiar with the crisis protocol for terrorist attacks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Are emergency procedures/drills routinely practiced to promote familiarity and effectiveness?</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
31. Lockdown drills are practiced, at least twice per school year, for armed intruders at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Lockdown drills are practiced because of legal mandates at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Lockdown drills are practiced often for hostage situations at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Evacuation drills for fire are practiced in regulation with fire codes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. I have been exposed to crisis plans and procedures at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. I possess knowledge of school violence prevention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. I know where to relocate in the event of a natural disaster.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. I have been trained in techniques in verbal communication strategies to calm an aggressive person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Do teachers believe that they are adequately trained to respond competently to a crisis?</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
39. I have received training in the last 12 months in first aide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. I have received training in the last 12 months in CPR.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. I am well trained to manage a crisis situation at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. My school receives help from outside consultants on how to develop effective crisis procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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