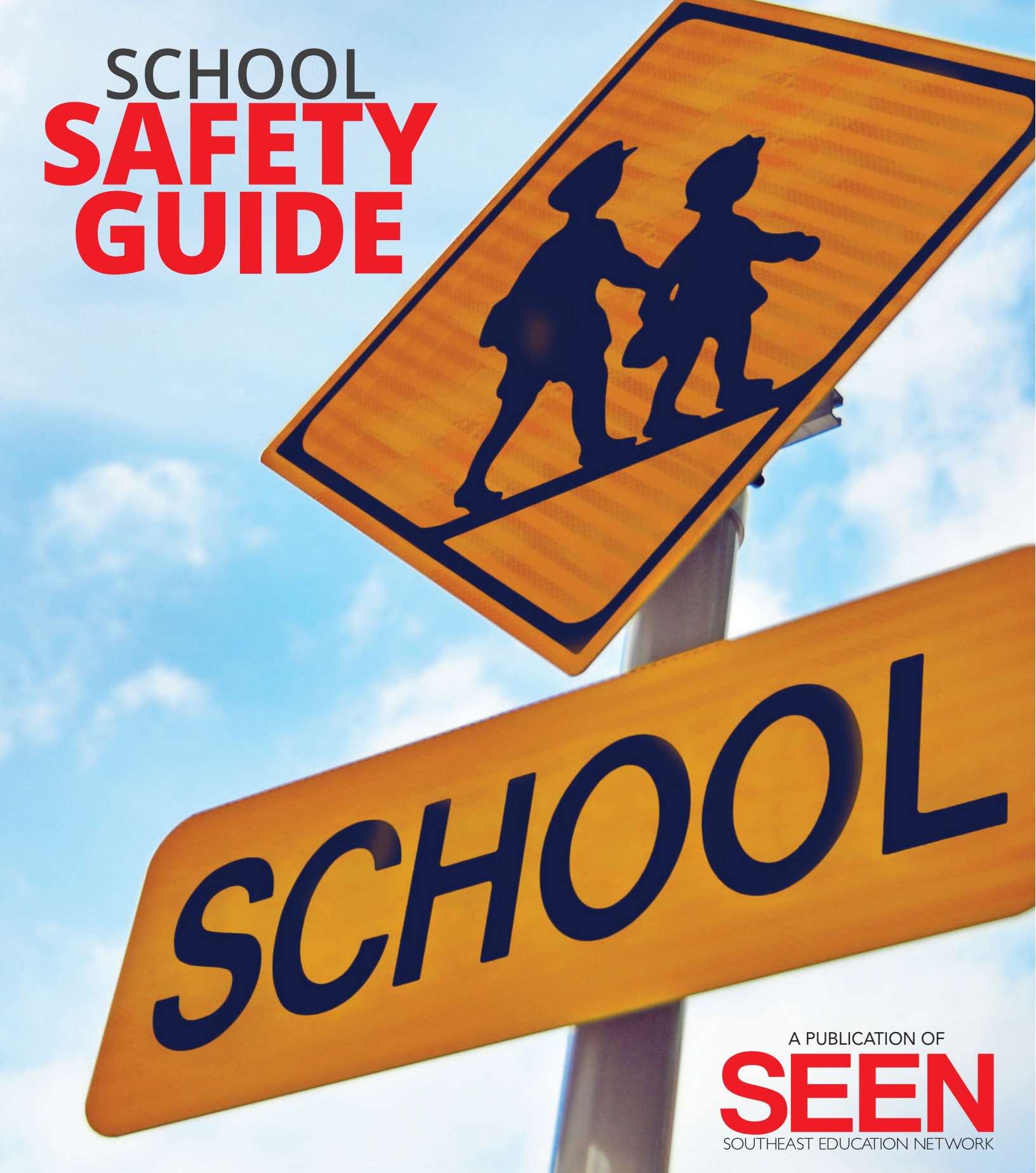
SCHOOL SAFETY GUIDE



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enough IS ENOUGH!

How to Think Different to Prevent School Shootings and Violence

By Rick Shaw

Enough is Enough! Different thinking is needed to prevent school shootings and violence.

Different thinking, different strategies, and different tools are needed based on overwhelming evidence, research-based data, and success stories proving PREVENTING school shootings and violence is possible.

Preventing school shootings (and other acts of violence) is what everyone wants, so HOW do schools and communities work together using different thinking to PREVENT school shootings and violence?

Billions of dollars have been spent on security related efforts, however shootings and violence related incidents are trending up rather than down, so what can school leaders and community leaders do to change the trend and achieve different results that students, faculty, staff, and parents are begging for?

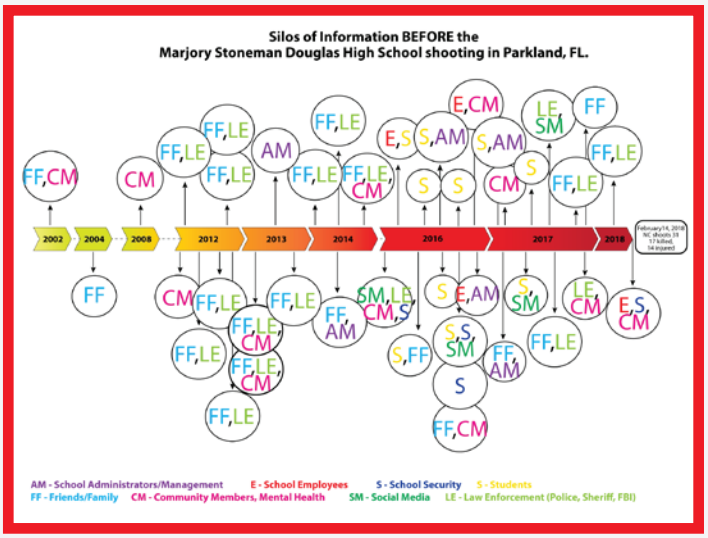
Different results require different questions to be asked so the right changes can be made and different results can be achieved.

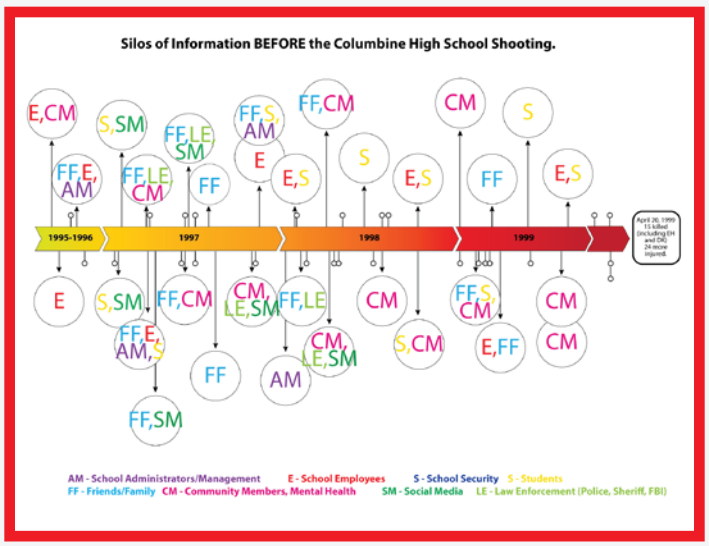
Questions like:

Have you noticed how more than enough Warning Signs were almost always observed and reported BEFORE incidents and tragedies occurred?

If more than enough Warning Signs were observed and reported BEFORE the incidents and tragedies occurred, why did intervention and prevention efforts fail again and again?

Research-based data from hundreds and hundreds of post-incident reports show over and over how more than enough Warning Signs were observed and recorded, but they were scattered across the school and community. When the right people were not able to see the bigger picture and not able to see the escalation of the at-risk individual(s), then the right intervention and the right prevention actions were not (and cannot) be taken.





As you can see, more than enough Warning Signs were observed and recorded in 1999 with the tragic shooting at Columbine High School and more than enough Warning Signs were observed and recorded in 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Even more sad is between 1999 and 2018, there were hundreds of other post-incident reports and timelines that look almost exactly the same, which is why different thinking, different strategies, and different tools are clearly needed.

Warning Signs were, and continue to be, scattered across Students, Faculty, Staff, Administration, Parents, Friends, Neighbors, Law Enforcement, Mental Health, Community Resources, Social Media, across multiple silo systems (Student Records, Student Conduct, Security/SROs, Nurse, Counselor, Student Athletics, Risk, HR, Legal, Transportation, and others), and across multiple incident reporting options (Trusted Adults, See Something Say Something, Hotlines – National/State/Local, Text Lines, Apps, Web Forms, Paper, Drop Boxes, etc.).

Nearly every school and community had (and has) numerous silos, disconnects, and gaps causing Warning Signs to be scattered so the right Team Members from school and community resources could not (and cannot) do the right things at the right time. How many of these common and dangerous gaps are in your school and community and putting your students, faculty, staff, and others at risk?

Other questions to ask:

Does your school/district have a Threat Assessment Team, Threat Management Team, Behavior Intervention Team, Bullying Team, Safety Team, Care Team, Counselor Team, Crisis Team, Ethics Team, Concussion Team, Student Athletics Team, and others?

Do your school/district Team Members participate on Community-wide Teams with the local Police Department, County Sheriff, Behavioral Health, Education Service Units, Adult and Juvenile Probation, County Attorney Office, Juvenile Justice Center, Higher Education Institutions, Social Workers, and others?

Do your School-wide Team Members and Community-wide Team Members have the right tools to securely share confidential and sensitive information to meet FERPA and HIPAA and other privacy and confidentiality obligations?

Does your school take advantage of FERPA's Law Enforcement Unit Records guidelines, or are you creating huge potential liabilities by having your school/district Team Members use Student Records System and Student Conduct System (which Community-wide Team Members cannot access) to manage incidents, investigations, assessments, interventions, legal due diligence, and other documentation?

As more and more state lawmakers and state education departments mandate Threat Assessment Teams in schools, it is important to understand that most schools experiencing incidents and tragedies had one or more Teams already in place. However, even with one or more Teams in place, if Team Members cannot see all of the Warning Signs and timelines (by collecting the Warning Signs into a central, secure, and community-wide platform), Team Members will struggle to see the bigger picture and struggle to do the right things at the right times in order to prevent escalations and incidents. Not seeing the bigger picture and not having the right school-wide and community-wide tools will lead to more failed prevention efforts, leaving responding to incidents and tragedies as the only option.

For a reality check, ask your Team Members how many times they have responded to incidents and then afterwards found out other people were aware of the Warning Signs, but the Team Members were not aware. Most School Administrators and School Board Members would be shocked to learn how often this is happening and how many near misses there have been.

Near misses should serve as a wake-up call that different thinking, different strategies, and different tools are critically needed sooner than later, because making changes (and making excuses) after an embarrassing incident or costly tragedy is too late.

More questions you should be asking:

Do you have a First Responders and Crisis Response Plan? Do you have a First Preventers and Crisis Prevention Plan?

Did you perform a Security Assessment to identify Security Gaps? Did you perform a Prevention Assessment to identify Prevention Gaps?

Did you conduct an Active Shooter Response Drill? Did you conduct an Active Shooter Prevention Drill?

Did you train on and talk about Run Hide Fight (Reacting to an attacker at your door)? Did you train on and talk about Collect Assess Connect (Preventing an attacker from escalating and showing up at your door)?

Based on evidence-based data and lessons learned, the questions above should be asked and then acted on in your schools, districts, and communities because BOTH First Responders (defense and security) and First Preventers (offense and intervention) are critically needed to achieve different results.

In addition to mandates on Threat Assessment Teams, many state lawmakers and education departments are strongly suggesting or even requiring certain reporting programs be used within their schools. You may have seen a number of these suggested such as "See Something Say Something" or "Safe2Tell" or "Safe2Say" or "Safe Voice", however it is important to remember that overwhelming evidence and research-based data clearly reveals prevention failure problems were NOT due to failures with seeing and saying something. Over and over the evidence reveals more than enough Warning Signs were observed and reported (remember the timelines above), but common disconnects and gaps and not securely sharing all of the Warning Signs with all the right Team Members and then "Not Doing the RIGHT things" to disrupt and intervene are where the REAL Prevention problems existed.

More questions that need to be asked:

How is your Threat Assessment Team going to "Do the Right Things" if the incident reports and Warning Signs are in a call center database maintained by a third party or State agency?

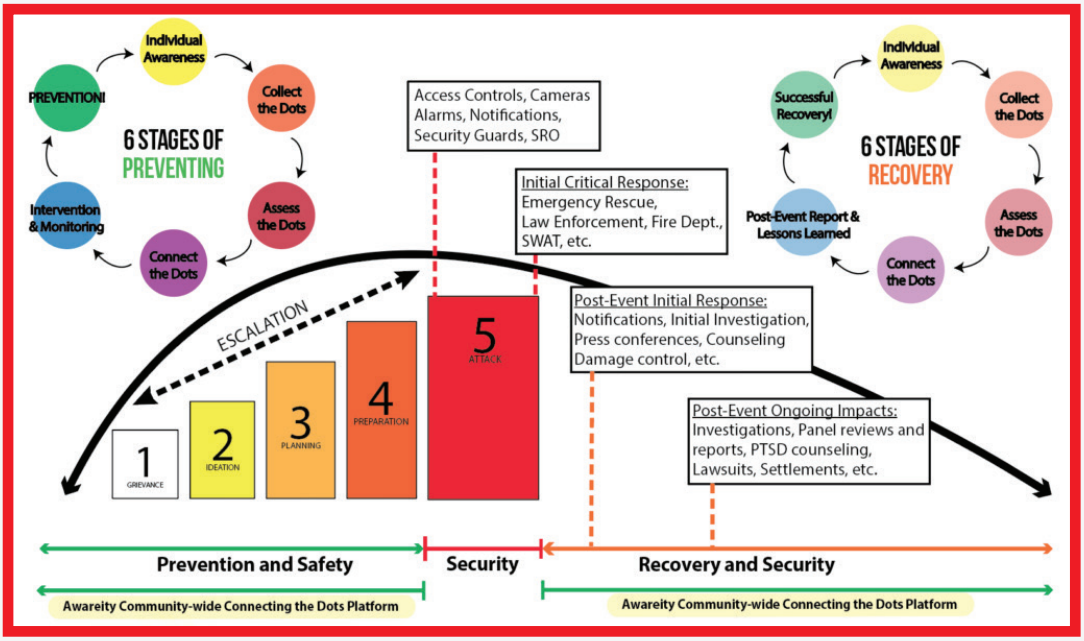
What about sensitive incident reports and Warning Signs involving sex crimes or sexting or other that are NOT sent from call center to your Threat Assessment Team because they cannot be emailed?

How is your Threat Assessment Team going to "connect the dots" if ALL the Warning Signs are NOT accessible in a central community-wide platform that has ALL the other Warning Signs from students, teachers, staff and administrators so Team Members can see the big picture?

What about Warning Signs like changes in grades, changes in the way a student is dressing, hygiene changes, sleeping changes, scary stories/poems submitted for homework, dropping classes, dropping sports/clubs/extracurricular activities, etc.? Warning Signs like these are not likely to be called in to "say something" hotlines, but they have shown to be critical pieces of the puzzle. Without seeing the big picture, how will the "right people take the right actions"?

What about all the Warning Signs observed by community members, social media community, and community resources?

Another dangerous and related gap in schools and



communities is the lack of a comprehensive First Preventers Program. For example, if you asked every student, every faculty member, every staff member, every administrator, and every parent if they preferred Preventing an incident or tragedy or Responding to an incident or tragedy, nearly 100% (or maybe everyone) would say they prefer PREVENTING an incident or tragedy.

However, even though PREVENTING is preferred by almost everyone, most schools, districts, and communities are still focusing on and spending most of their budgets on First Responders, First Responder Plans, First Responder Training and lots of expensive First Responder Tools.

It is scary, but most schools, districts, and communities do NOT have a First Preventers Program, First Preventers Plans, and First Preventers Training or the right Strategies and the right Tools for First Preventers to intervene and disrupt at-risk individuals from escalating to the level of attacking.

Research-based data and evidence-based data from hundreds and hundreds of previous incidents and tragedies expose how the lack of a comprehensive First Preventers Program have left schools and communities vulnerable to dangerous attacks and tragedies.

Research-based data and evidence-based data also exposes how the SAME common silos, disconnects, and gaps exist in nearly every school and across nearly every community. These common silos, disconnects, and gaps can leave Warning Signs scattered and schools and communities vulnerable to dangerous attacks and tragedies.

Research-based data and evidence-based data from hundreds and hundreds of previous incidents and tragedies, when reverse engineered, also exposes HOW to PREVENT incidents and attacks BEFORE they occur. PREVENTING is possible based on evidence-based successes in schools and communities who decided to think differently, use different strategies and tools and take PREVENTING to the next level.

PREVENTING is what everyone wants and PREVENTING can save lives, reputations, and bottom lines for your school and your community.

Enough is Enough! Don't you agree it is time to start using the overwhelming research, evidence, and successes to gain advantages and start PREVENTING more incidents and tragedies?

Rick Shaw is President of Awareity. For more information, visit www.awareity.com

Have you noticed how Warning Signs were always observed and reported BEFORE incidents occurred?

"The importance of detecting and addressing concerning behavior, thoughts, or statements cannot be overstated.

In fact, preventing violence by detecting and addressing these red flags is more effective than any physical security measure."

- 2018 K12 School Security Guide
from the US Department of Homeland Security

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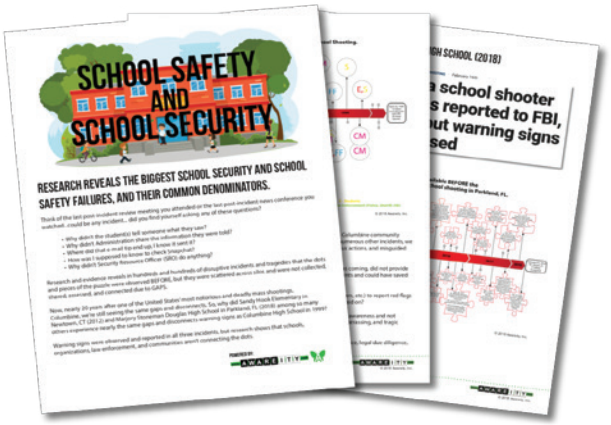

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