

Security in public schools thesis

[Law](#), [Security](#)



Security among public schools has been in the limelight for the past years and triggered growing concern of the safety of students at school. This was a result following numerous violent incidents in school in which some of them resulted to the death of students and school officials. This had resulted to growing concern of parents with school-aged children. Likewise, this has also brought increased alarm in the society. Public schools in particular have taken the first steps in accessing and improving security measures in their respective school are implementing. However, even if the schools reason for applying these measures are focused towards the protection of the students and school officials, parents are having the impression that they are given limited access to their children. They argue that aside expecting that the school where their child is studying is safe and secure, they also would want to take part in their children's school activities, see them do school activities, talk to their teachers and the like. With the current setup, parents are not able to enter the school premises if there is no prior notice of a meeting or permission from the security giving them the impression that their involvement in school activities are not welcome.

Home-school partnership is vital in the holistic development of a student. In fact, it is encouraged that parents or guardians take full partnership in educating their children. Conversely, the identification of true school visitors from visitors who have plans of harming children is very difficult without the application of certain security measures to be implemented. Because of these, authorities have been given having difficulties on how to properly implement security measures lest the addition of such. Yet, with the increasingly growing number of incidents happening in schools today, it is

high time to increase the security among public schools.

Parents expect that upon turning in their schools within the walls of the school, their kids will be safe until they come and get them. Rochan Bonie notices the lack of security in her daughter public school in Washington. It didn't have a logbook of visitors entering the school grounds. He also notes more worse situation in his son's school where visitors can freely come in and out of the school without even being seen by the schools security guard. This didn't bother him the Sandy Hook massacre which killed twenty children and six adults in Connecticut. This incident brought about attention to the lack of security measures provided in the school. However, not all public schools lack security measures as his son's former school have their guest pass by the security guard, have ID's and ID pictures taken before giving a badge to be worn out the whole duration of his stay inside the campus. Another aunt of his who is a teacher, needs to undergo several surveillance cameras just by entering her class. (Rochman, 2012)

Surveys conducted by several organizations had revealed that after the several violent school incidents, students have felt less safe in their schools. However, students whose schools who partnered with local policemen to watch over their school premises have felt safer. In a study conducted by W. G. Jennings and company on the effect of law enforcement officers with regards to the security measures and incidence of school crimes, they found out that there is significant effect of the number of local enforcers to the number of school related crimes. Particularly, they found out that schools with greater number of law enforcers around, there is lower incidence of crime as compared to schools with a fewer number of law enforces. Further,

they concluded that the utilization of law enforces to help guard or just be within the premises of the school is an effective way of reducing crimes in schools. (Jennings, 2011) In general, this particular study found out that law enforcement can partner up with school security measures to help address the growing number of school crimes.

Crimes are not only committed in middle and high schools as there are also crimes in primary schools. Based on the statistics collected by the National Center for Education Statistics during the school year 2009-2010, security measures applied by public school varies depending on the level of schools. Generally, more security measures are applied to high schools compared to primary schools with the use of the “ following safety and security measures: drug testing for athletes; drug testing for students in extracurricular activities; requiring students to wear badges or picture IDs; random dog sniffs to check for drugs; random sweeps for contraband, and using security cameras to monitor the school. In contrast, a lower percentage of high schools than middle schools and primary schools reported controlling access to buildings during school hours, and the percentage of high schools that reported prohibiting the use of cell phones and text messaging devices was lower than the corresponding percentages of primary schools and middle schools. The percentage of high schools that reported requiring students to wear uniforms was lower than the percentages of middle schools and primary schools with such a requirement.” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012)

In Anne Cline’s study focusing on the heightening of security measures in schools, she identified major security measures to implement. First, schools

should adopt a zero tolerance policy. This according to her is the implementation of predetermined penalties to offenses done by students. Majority of public schools in the country adopts this mechanism which aims at preventing students from doing the prohibited actions as they already know that they will experience sanctions. Another is to increase the physical security of the school. Increasing means the provision security cameras, metal detectors and other security devices. In addition, security protocols are also established like establishing guards in all entry points and proper identification of guests. Likewise, communication devices and increased lighting are also additional security measures. Other schemes used by schools is through the requirement of wearing of school uniforms and usage of transparent bags with the purpose of seeing what is inside their bags. She also suggested the increasing of liaison with law enforcement agencies and other security offices. Schools school also have violence programs to help guide the students. (Cline, 2004)

The implementation of a heightened security measures had significantly decreased the number of school related crimes, surveys says. Decreased in national fear of crimes was realized and the percentage of students who tries to avoid some path because they are afraid of crimes to bestow upon them had also decreased. Aside from these, lower records of students with possessions of drugs and assaults was also realized. Absenteeism because of fear was also greatly reduced. (Cline, 2004)

The government has also work hand in hand with the schools in their aim to increase security in the schools through the US Department of Defense Homeland Security to provide free trainings, funding and resources in an

effort to equip school officials with the proper technical knowledge on handling emergencies and new security technologies available. Grants are even given to purchase security equipment to schools where violent incidences have occurred. ()

The increasing number of schools equipped with security equipments is “ a way of controlling youths and increasingly, teachers and parents. It is an example of how technology and telecommunication in surveillance, detection, identification and database technologies.” (Torres, 2010)

The National Institute of Justice identified appropriate and effective technologies that can be used in the schools. These includes the use of video surveillance in the form of video cameras of cctv's, the use of metal detectors either through the use of hand-held or walk-through to determine possible weapons that can be used to inflict harm to others, and x-ray baggage scanners. In addition, limiting the entry and exit points as well as implementing a corresponding entry control mechanism should also be observed.

Although several advantages of strengthening the security among schools have been identified, there is still the question of the right to privacy of the students. Although, a safe environment for students is desired, there are still effects of the implementation of a rigid security to the parents and students. The provision or armed security guards is one method of increasing school security. In fact, about 33% of schools are already arming their security guards, though, doing so entails a lot of budget on the side school. However, several surveys conducted reveals that kids tend to believe that they are more unsafe with the presence of guards because they are afraid that the

guards would shoot them and could affect their studies. (Plumer, 2012) This may be because “ students who feel safe, supported, and connected in school (psychological safety) tend to have better social, behavioral and academic outcomes.” Plumer, 2012)

Others have also commented that the “ intrusive security” being implemented in the public schools only promotes social inequality though they accept the fact that school security must be enhanced. Some students feel that they are being robbed off their privacy if they went through metal detectors and security cameras everytime they enter the school’s premises but they can’t do much. Teachers or personnel who feel the same don’t want to talk about it because of feel of losing their jobs. Sometimes, teachers takes advantages of the secured security mechanisms to deal with their students. This has made some students fee that instead of the school keeping them safe, it is them who must keep safe from the school. Valery Glynn, a retired teacher says that the money spent on the acquisition of the material must be better spent in improving the educational resources of the schools. (Wright, 2012) Several students likewise complains on the rigid security measures being implemented in school as this they say violates their rights to privacy, as sometimes they are being subjected to unannounced locker searches.

The tightening of security may give the impression to students that they are not trusted by the institution where they belong and does not promote a healthy environment. Communication and interaction between and among students may be hindered and their individually may not be enhanced as their actions are somewhat limited having silent rules.

Still, others argue that the implementation of security measures is an unwelcoming scene to visitors or liaison officers coming to the school because they will feel being naked with the security mechanisms that are implemented. The biggest hurdle however that schools have been facing are the parents of the students. They don't want the security measures because they think that they and their kids are being imprisoned in the schools because they almost everything they do is being monitored. If they want check on their kids, they need to go through a series of security measures before actually coming face to face with their kids.

In the case of the Sandy Hook incident, the principal Dawn Hochsprng was among the first victims, however, he has recently installed an additional security system of locking the schools but this didn't prevent the killer to enter the school as somehow there were still lapses. This is just a proof that “ there are no absolutes” but risks can be significantly reduced. (Brochman, 2012)

Increasing security among public schools can be equated to increasing the budget of public schools with at least 50% as it is known for a fact that security equipments are not cheap. In addition with equipment, the increasing security also means additional manpower to man these security devices and they must be equipped with necessary trainings for these to become effective. Physical security would take the bulk of budget. Several people have the opinion that instead of purchasing these expensive equipments, then can be used in several more important projects. Law enforcers can affect the children as they are reminders that crimes against the m can be committed anytime. With regards to the implementation of

zero tolerance policies, no study has proven that the presence of such has significantly improved the behavior of the students and these might form other issues with their parents. (Brochan, 2012)

Although, several issues are raised against increasing security among public schools, it is still the task of the schools to keep the students safe while they are within their charge. Once a student enters the premises of the school, they become the schools responsibilities. Because the number of school officials is significantly below the number of students in any school, it will be impossible for them to constantly keep an eye to their students. Thus, additional security measures must be implemented.

In increasing security, this thus not mean buying of all available security gadgets present in the market. A thorough assessment on the security needs of the school must first be done together with its possible effect to its students. School officials must first identify current problems and possible ways of solving them with or without the aid of security measures. Violence prevention programs that are based on facts to support the move must be established. As security is important, good rapport with children's parent are as important. The best way for the school management to determine the extent of security they need within their school is through the involvement of parents while planning the security scheme for their children,

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