Early Warning Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools

Guiding Principals For Identifying Early Warning Signs

☐ Establish caring and supportive relationship with children and youth.
☐ Get to know needs, feelings, attitudes, and behavior patterns of students.
☐ Review school records for patterns of behaviors or sudden changes in behavior.
☐ Do No Harm: The early warning signs should not be used as rationale to isolate, exclude, or punish a child.
☐ Understand violence and aggression within a context: Many factors can contribute to aggressive behavior. Some children may act out if stress becomes too great, if they lack positive coping skills, and if they have learned to react with aggression.
☐ Avoid Stereotyping: It is important to be aware of false cues- including race, socio-economic status, cognitive or academic ability, or physical appearance. In fact, such stereotypes can unfairly harm children, especially when the school community acts upon them.
☐ View warning signs within a developmental context. Children at different levels of development have varying social and emotional capabilities.
☐ Understand that children typically exhibit multiple warning signs. Research confirms that most children who are troubled/high potential show multiple early warning signs. Thus, it is important not to overreact to single signs, words or actions.

Early warning Signs

☐ Social withdrawal
☐ Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone
☐ Excessive feelings of rejection
☐ Being a victim of violence
☐ Feelings of being picked on and persecuted
☐ Low school interest and poor academic performance
☐ Expression of violence in writings and drawings
☐ Uncontrolled anger
☐ Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behavior
☐ History of discipline problems
☐ Past history of violent and aggressive behavior
☐ Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes
☐ Drug use and alcohol use
☐ Affiliation with gangs
☐ Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms
☐ Serious threats of violence
There are certain times when immediate attention must be given to the student in order to ensure safety in the school environment.

Imminent Warning Signs Need Imminent Response

☐ Serious physical fighting with peers or family members
☐ Severe destruction of property
☐ Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons
☐ Detailed threats of lethal violence
☐ Possession of and/or use of firearms and other weapons
☐ Other self injurious behaviors or threats of suicide
☐ Has a detailed injurious plan to harm others

Plan of Action

1. For multiple warning signs, fill out the lavender SAP referral form or discuss the student with the school counselor or SAP counselor. Contact the parent and discuss your concern for the student based upon the behaviors you have witnessed.
2. If you are responding to Imminent warning signs, contact your Principal or Assistant Principal. You may also contact the School Resource Officer. Safety must always be the first and foremost consideration.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

1. Focus on academic achievement
2. Involve families in meaningful ways
3. Develop links to the community
4. Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff
5. Discuss safety issues openly. Teach children that they are responsible for their actions and that the choices they make have consequences for which they are accountable.
6. Treat students with equal respect.
7. Create ways for students to share their concerns.
8. Help children feel safe expressing their feelings.
9. Promote good citizenship and character.
10. Promote positive interaction and participation in the classroom.