



tips for confronting campus violence

From Rick Fitzpatrick, Superintendent of Corning Union Elementary School District

- 1. It could happen to you.** Beware the rationalizing of how your district is different. A school shooting can happen anywhere. Have a plan template with all communications for a generic disaster prepared. These need to include e-mails, press releases, texts, social media messages, robocall message scripts, etc. Time to prepare these during an actual shooting will be non-existent.
- 2. Lock-downs work.** Prepare students regularly using the same language/process all the time. When a lock-down happens have students run, don't walk to safe areas. In a real crisis they will behave as they practice. In the Rancho Tehama shooting, we had a window of 10 seconds of lock-down completion before the shooter appeared in the quad and fired over 100 rounds into classrooms and offices.
- 3. Empower any adult employee on your campus to call a lock-down.** Seconds save lives.
- 4. Media management matters.** Designate one spokesperson to speak with media. Be human, be calm, be candid. Press releases daily or twice daily work. Press conferences are key, no more than one per day or you will not be able to take care of communication and care of staff, community, and victims. Protect your employees. National media wishes to put a face on a tragedy, employees can be harmed additionally through intense media scrutiny. If employees designate you as their spokesperson, you can save them much pain and stress. Do not release school camera videos. We objected successfully. Show your district and your community that you care. Love matters.
- 5. A shooting has three phases, the before (preparation for disaster) the during, and the after.** The after is far more complex than anyone can imagine. Dr. David Schonfeld from the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement <https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/> was crucial in post-shooting strategies and counseling for victims, staff members, and crucially, family members of staff. Beware free services that seek to capitalize on your tragedy. Dr. Schonfeld is a free resource and can be crucial to identifying appropriate therapies and resources.
- 6. Advocate for measures to reduce gun violence in schools.** We owe it to our children.