

Safe School Act

Written by Mike Muzzy
Monday, 30 November 2009 10:08 -

As of August 15, 1995, a new law came into effect in New Hampshire with wide-ranging implications for schools, students, and parents. You are probably aware that schools and parents across the country are very concerned about discipline and violence in schools - as are all of us in Weare. All students have two very basic rights at school:

- To be safe
- To be in an environment conducive to learning

Anything which interferes with these rights needs to be identified, examined, and improved upon. And, the two rights are linked. Good education cannot take place if students are not (or do not feel) safe at school!

The new law is called the Safe Schools Act. We believe that its thrust is a very positive one, and that it will, over time, have a positive affect on our school and community. It may be the key to helping the moral dilemma some feel our country faces. The main focus of the law is to intervene and help students at a young age to prevent further and more profound problems later in life. We have reprinted a copy of the language in the state statutes.

There are a number of implications and new procedures which arise from this law. The major point is that the school is required to report incidents to the Weare Police Department. In many cases, this is not an issue of administrative discretion or judgement - it is a requirement!

Prior to our enacting this procedure here at WMS, many meetings were held between our administration and the police. The result is a protocol of agreement between the Weare School District and the Weare Police Department. This document describes the principles and philosophical base of the law, the establishment of a close school/police liaison, the policy on reporting violations (school to police and vice versa), procedures for reporting, guidelines for further action, and court/community intervention programs. A copy of this complete document is available in the Office for your perusal. This protocol was approved by the Weare School Board on September 3, 1997 and went into effect immediately.

As a result of this protocol, there are some changes in the forms we use to communicate discipline problems with students to parents. The Discipline Referral form will now indicate that

Safe School Act

Written by Mike Muzzy

Monday, 30 November 2009 10:08 -

a report has been filed with the Weare Police Department, per the Safe Schools Act (NHRSA 193-D). In addition, the same indication will also appear in the letter to parents notifying them of a student suspension. Our reports to the police will indicate what action we have taking at school. At this point, the Weare Police Department will determine any further action or assistance to be employed, if any. A copy of the Safe Schools Report Form is also on file in the Office for parent perusal.

The aim of this law is to make the schools a safer place for all - and thus, to improve education! It is now mandatory for the school to report the following:

- Acts of theft (value over \$50.00)
- Acts of destruction (value over \$50.00)
- Possession or selling of weapons (such as firearms)
- Assault causing injury requiring medical attention
- Acts of arson
- Threats or acts causing fear of injury
- Possession, being under the influence, or selling of alcohol or drugs
- Sexual Assault

Discretionary reporting events which are up to the judgement of the building principal include:

- Repeated refusal or neglect to conform to reasonable rules of the school given by staff members
- Simple assault
- Acts of theft (value of \$49.00 or less)
- Acts of destruction (value of \$49.00 or less)

As stated in the Student-Parent handbook, our discipline policy calls for contact with parents in all disciplinary situations (including simple assault). We would also draw your attention to the new section on the Safe Schools Act in the Handbook.

Implicit in this whole procedure is that we all work together - school, parents, and law enforcement - to identify patterns of unsafe behaviour. We will then be able to co-ordinate our efforts to respond effectively and prevent further incidents.