

# Five Ways Good COMMUNICATION Can Boost School Safety

**Good communication can resolve many of the issues that parents worry about while their kids are at school**—bullying, fights, hate crimes—and their effect on scholastic performance. Crime prevention practitioners can help in the following five ways.

- **ASSIST SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN BECOMING THE VOICE OF SCHOOL SAFETY.** Fewer than 20 percent of parents hear about bullying, theft, and other safety issues from school administrators; most of the time they learn about incidents from their children. However, young people may not have all of the facts. Parents can help quell the rumor mill that can feed conflict or bullying at school, which can affect the scholastic environment. Work with schools to identify ways to communicate directly to parents about school activities designed to make the school safer.
- **HELP SCHOOLS FIND WAYS TO COMMUNICATE ROUTINELY ABOUT SAFETY EFFORTS.** Two-thirds of parents have never talked to their children's teachers about safety issues, and fewer than one-quarter of parents say their child's school frequently communicates with them about safety measures, safety curricula, and disciplinary policies. Don't wait until a tragedy leaves parents questioning how safe their children are. Encourage administrators to be proactive and inform parents of programs they implement to prevent violence.
- **ENCOURAGE SCHOOLS TO HIGHLIGHT BULLYING PREVENTION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION EFFORTS.** Bullying and fighting are among parents' top safety concerns. Thirty percent of parents of middle school students are worried that their child will be bullied, and more than 25 percent of black and Hispanic parents worry that their child will be a victim of a hate crime. Many parents—14 percent overall and 22 percent in urban areas—are also worried that their child will be involved in fights. Show schools how to publicize their bullying prevention and conflict resolution training for staff and their counseling and peer mediation training for students. *Remember:* Parents can help their children deal with such issues as bullying only if they have the facts and know what resources are available, and bullying can have a dramatic impact on academic performance.

- **PROMOTE COMMUNICATING TO PARENTS VIA PHONE AND EMAIL, AND AT SCHOOL EVENTS.** More than half of middle school parents prefer phone calls and emails as the primary method of communication from schools. Only 30 percent prefer paper newsletters mailed home, while 25 percent prefer newsletters brought home by children. Fewer than 15 percent prefer postings on the school's website, online newsletters, or text messages. Encourage and help schools to use school events to educate parents about safety and how to keep their children safe.
- **HELP SCHOOLS IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTS TO GET INVOLVED IN SCHOOL SAFETY.** Suggest that the school safety committee recruit one or two parents. If the school asks you to conduct a safety walk-through, invite parents to join. Suggest that schools ask parents to join staff at training events on safety. Propose that the school start NCPC's Be Safe and Sound in School program, which provides a model for engaging parents in making schools safer.

For more information on engaging parents or building safer schools, visit the National Crime Prevention Council's website, [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org).

