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School Security Statement prepared by George Sugai, Storrs, CT

Reducing inappropriate access and use of guns, improving mental health supports, and increasing school safety together are important in improving the school experience for all of our children. The purpose of this statement is to highlight the school safety and security aspects of this effort.

All students, educators, families, and community members should experience schools as welcoming places that are safe, respectful, and responsible and that minimize risk and maximize academic and social success. Achieving and maintaining these places for our children require a formal and comprehensive approach that should be reflected in our policy and practice. None of the following alone will be sufficient; more in unison will be necessary:

1. All students and educators should have the opportunity to learn social skills for success at school, including, problem solving, managing conflicts, managing self, and treating others respectfully. These skills are made of observable behaviors that can be taught and practiced, and help students to understand and act appropriately.
2. All students and educators should receive hourly and daily recognition for their use of social skills for success, in the same manner that they receive feedback on their academic accomplishments.
3. All families should receive constructive feedback and positive recognition about the academic and social accomplishments and needs of their children at school.
4. All students should be actively, positively, and preventively supervised and monitored across all school settings so that constructive and trusting interpersonal relationships are fostered.
5. Some students should have additional academic and/or social skill support to ensure their success and accomplishments at school, and some students should have even more intensive support for individual success. School staff should have the expertise and opportunity to support students who need more specialized assistance.
6. Every educator should be able to ensure and demonstrate that the academic and social skill strategies and programs in their classrooms and schools are the most effective, efficient, and relevant (developmentally and culturally) available AND are being implemented with the highest degree of accuracy and integrity. Doing a few effective strategies well on a daily basis is better than doing too many strategies poorly on an irregular basis.
7. Every day, all members of the school community (teachers; administrators; school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and resource officers; special educators; office, cafeteria, bus, and maintenance staff) must actively contribute to promoting welcoming and supportive school environments.

8. Schools should be a safe and welcoming resource to family and community members to obtain information, communicate concerns, and participate in student success.

9. On a monthly basis, family and school members should conduct self-assessments of and practice procedures for high risk emergency and crisis situations (e.g., fire, intruders, injury, weather) and ensure that adequate safeguards are in place.

Students who experience academic AND social skill success will become successful contributors to safe, respectful, and responsible schools. In addition, knowing which students might need extra supports for success and having the capacity to provide high quality supports enable success for ALL students. In turn, their parents and teachers will have the confidence and trust to have meaningful communications with them and each other. Minimizing the possibilities of school violence and improving our abilities to respond are inextricably linked to positive relationships and effective and meaningful communications.

Successful and sustained implementation of these kinds of practices and policies will require a unified effort at multiple entities, including state and district education agencies, school-level leadership, personnel preparation institutions, and professional associations.

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