

CONFERENCE ON SCHOOL SAFETY
Tuesday, October 10, 2006

PANEL II: PREPARED SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES ARE SAFER

Moderator: Margaret Spellings, Secretary of Education
(9:50 AM to 10:50 AM)

Panel II Participants

Frederick Ellis, Director, Office of
Safety and Security, Fairfax County
Public Schools, Fairfax, VA

James Moore, Founder and President,
WatchDOGS, Springhill, AR

The Honorable Jane Norton,
Lieutenant Governor, Denver, CO

Chiarasay E. "Chiara" Perkins, Student,
Walton Senior High School and President,
Youth Crime Watch of Walton County,
DeFuniak Springs, FL

Dr. George Sugai, Professor and Neag
Endowed Chair, Neag School of Education,
University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT

Patrick Weil, Principal, Valparaiso High
School, Valparaiso, IN

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Secretary of Education,
Margaret Spellings.
(Applause.)

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Thank you. All right, if I could ask everybody to
take their seats. I think that was a great start. I thank Attorney General Gonzales for
getting us off, along with the members of that panel. A lot of issues were provoked that I
think are a nice segway into the discussion that we're about to have here in Panel II,
which is about prepared communities. We know that prepared communities means safer
schools, and that's what we're here to talk about.

We have lots of great expertise and many, many perspectives on this panel. I'll
introduce them in mass and then turn to them for their comments, and then we'll have
some interaction with you toward the end of our discussion.

The first person who will be addressing us this morning on this panel is Colorado Lieutenant Governor Jane Norton. Governor, thank you for being here. She is from Colorado as well as I said, and they obviously have been responding very lately to the tragedy there as well as, you know, have lots of lessons to share post-Columbine. So, Governor, thank you for being here.

Also joining us is Dr. George Sugai, who is a professor at the University of Connecticut, and the College of Education. And he is an expert on identifying, adapting and sustaining positive school environments. That's one of the things that we talked about a little bit this morning, is the environment at school, the nurturing nature of it. So, Dr. Sugai, thank you for being here.

Next we'll be hearing from Patrick Weil, who is the principal of Valparaiso High School in Indiana. In 2004, a student attacked seven peers with knives there, and since that time, obviously they have taken many steps to ensure that that sort of thing does not happen again. Thank you, Mr. Principal, for being here.

Next is my fellow Texan, Jim Moore, who founded a group called Project WatchDOGS. D-O-G-S stands for Dads Of Great Students. And he has a very innovative approach to engaging parents, specifically dads, in this issue. So, Jim, we can't wait to hear from you.

And then finally is Chiara, Chiara Perkins who is a junior at Walton County High School in Florida, and she has helped lead her school's Youth Crime Watch program for the past four years. And I think we all know that without engaging students, we're not going to be effective. So, Chiara, thank you for being here.

So Governor, let me start with you. Please tell us about what you have learned in Colorado, and give us your perspective and what advice you'd have for other state officials working on these issues.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR NORTON: Thank you, Madam Secretary, and I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this important summit.

Columbine forever changed the way that Americans view the potential of violence in their schools. We know we can't restore the losses or erase what we've seen in terms of horrors, but we can take away important and valuable lessons to make our schools and our communities safer. And Columbine certainly afforded us that opportunity.

In the area of communication, we learned that to be able to interface different law enforcement agencies for responding is absolutely critical. And Colorado has dedicated itself to a digital trunk radio system that utilizes the newly allocated 700 megahertz spectrum for public safety in order to have different law enforcement be able to communicate in case of an emergency. This is a partnership with the local government.

If you want to participate, you can. And currently we have about 85 percent of the state covered. We hope to have 100 percent covered in the near future.

The second area is in terms of what we learned with planning. You heard about it in the original panel earlier this morning. We have 64 counties, 103,000 schools in the state of Colorado. Each one is required to have a variety of emergency plans in place. They're tied in to the accreditation. We have a safety analyst that looks at the plans. They're part of our Department of Education, and those plans also have ways that parents are notified in case of an emergency.

The third area is in training. You've heard about the importance of inter-agency training. We've taken that to heart in Colorado. We have an all-hazards system of nine regions in that we interact with different agencies and stakeholders in that process. You've heard about the importance of listening and the Safe to Tell project, so I won't go into that.

But one of the most important lessons that we learned is that people want to be a part of the solution. And communities, business leaders, law enforcement can all do things like adopting a school and providing a little bit more of a presence in that school. We also have an innovative project that Douglas County has done, and it's called the Seniors Work-Off program. And seniors can actually reduce part of their property tax by volunteering in a school system. And so again, it just provides another set of eyes, relationships in the district.

But finally, let me just say that it is incumbent upon all of us to be vigilant. And our state School Board after Columbine released a statement that talked about this rip in our moral fabric when violence occurs in a school. And that we can do a lot of different things, but we have to be vigilant in terms of teaching not only academic literacy but moral literacy. And that the faith-based community values, teaching, discipline and respect are all important parts of keeping our schools safer and our communities safer.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Thank you, Governor. You know, you talked about successful strategies there. I think since you all have been at it for a while out there, talk about some of the things that maybe you thought were going to work and didn't prove to be as effective, and that you revisited.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR NORTON: Well, I think one of the things that Columbine taught us is that individual agencies did a great job in responding, but if they hadn't practiced together in a unified way, they weren't nearly as effective. And again, you talked about it earlier. It was touched upon in the panel earlier, is the importance of building those relationships. Building relationships during a crisis is not the time. We need to do advance planning. And so those were some of the important lessons we've learned.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Thank you, Governor. Fred, my apologies. I overlooked my own school district representative. Fred Ellis, we'll turn to him next. He

is the director of the Office of Safety and Security in Fairfax County Public Schools, and has been recognized as one of the premier plans for school safety in this country. That is my school district actually too. And Fred is a member of my Commission on Safe and Drug-Free Schools. So, Fred, my apologies, and please tell us about your experience in Fairfax County, how it is that you've come to be one of the nation's premier school safety sites.

MR. ELLIS: Well, thank you, and no need to apologize. I'm used to--my wife ignores me quite frequently. Can't say that I blame her.

But in terms of why Fairfax County Public Schools has been recognized, quite frankly I think there are a lot of other schools systems out there that are doing a great job, doing a lot of work. And we have done a lot in Fairfax County, but it's one of those things that we're never done, we're never satisfied. There are always things to do, always things to improve, and we know that.

Quite frankly, back in about 2000, we really took an initiative and really got buy-in from our school leadership at the time. And our position is that without that buy-in from the top, from the superintendent and the elected school officials, it's really difficult to have a vibrant, robust program in the school system because if it's not important to the people at the top, it doesn't become important to the people all the way down the chain. But we had that, so that was a big help.

And then quite frankly we looked at plans. We started doing plans, thinking about it, bringing in the other agencies that you've heard earlier in terms of public safety and all the other stakeholders to review the development of our plans, and we took an all hazards approach. But then we also took a look at individual types of incidents and what unique things exist about those, such as a bomb threat, what's the difference between a bomb threat response and a fire because there are some unique differences to those.

But also recognizing that in the end, there are only a certain number of things the school can do basically in terms of response plans. You can stay at school in a status quo position. You can do what we can an exterior lock-down, or some places call a soft lock-down where you lock the exterior of the building. You can also move into an interior lock-down where all the interior doors are locked. So you can stay there and you can also do a shelter in place. So those are the kind of responses that are in the school on the property.

And in terms of evacuations, you can leave the building, and you can stay on site, or you can go off site. So basically the responses come down to answering the question, is there a safer place for us to be and can we get there. So we kind of took that approach.

And then we filled in kind of the blanks in terms of a lot of the ancillary kind of issues that come up. In other words, communications. How are you going to communicate in all of those kinds of responses? How are you going to do student accountability? Parent-student reunification? How are we going to make contact? What

about staging areas and what not? You just kind of fit those into your planned development.

And then I think most importantly is that you have to practice those plans. We heard that earlier. They can't just be on the shelf. They absolutely cannot be. They have to be updated annually. We have an annual requirement for those to be updated, and then they're reviewed. In Fairfax County, they're reviewed by folks in my staff who are specifically trained to do that. And then we provide them facilitated table-top exercises at all of our schools so that the administrators and that crisis management team gets a chance to actually work their plan and see what works and what doesn't work, and what they might need to go back and tweak because one of the things we tell them is that you can't learn to dance the night of the ball. It's too late. And it's just not going to happen, so the next best thing to having lived through an experience is to get some experience in terms of exercises, drills and table-tops.

And then from there, we've really spent a lot of time researching I think some kind of I guess more advanced things, such as hazardous material locations. In your jurisdiction, what kind of materials might they contain, you know, all those kinds of things. And particularly in terms of partnerships with the local Emergency Management at the county level, state level and the federal level, how do we fit in in the school system, not just on the micro-level at the school, but on the macro-level. How does the school system fit in in terms of meeting obligations and responsibilities in terms of local governments emergency operations plan and possibly at a federal level. For instance, in Fairfax County, one of our facilities is a partner with the county facility for the management of strategic national stockpile component. So that's a big responsibility placed on the schools system.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Can you talk about parents and how you make sure that parents were informed about the status of school safety, or what they're to do if they get word of the situation?

MR. ELLIS: Yeah. That's a great question. The parents really play heroes, as well as the students. We have a very extensive website with a lot of the information that's publicly available on it. We also publish ever year in what we call our Family Gram.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Give us a few specifics off the Family Gram.

MR. ELLIS: Well, basically some of the things we talk about—we tell parents is one, we have plans. And if you're interested, contact your principal and talk about it. If you have concerns, we explain that we do have—for instance, a visitor control process. When you come to the school, you may not be able to just walk in any door you'd like to and wander the building. There's a process where you have to come through designated doors and get an ID, maybe have to show identification, those kinds of things. And explaining the different kinds of emergency responses, how we communicate with them and their responsibilities in terms of registering. For instance, their Blackberries and cell

phones and those kinds of things on-line so that we can push out text messaging to them in the event of an emergency. So all those kinds of nuts and bolts things that parents want to know, they need to know, and they can find out.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Thanks, Fred. Dr. Sugai, why don't you talk to us about how the culture of a safe school environment and how that's created by educators.

DR. SUGAI: Right. We've had the privilege over the last eight or so years to have a center that disseminates effective practices on changing school climate, or improving school climate. And the biggest lesson we've learned is that schools probably is one of our best social change agents we have. I have two children in high school, and my wife is an administrator, and my two kids spend more days in school with their teachers and with their peers than any other social change agent out there. And it's a great investment.

And one thing we're learning about what those environments look like and how do we change the school climates, it's really about making sure that all children inside the school are provided some kind of opportunity to learn about the right ways to behave if you will, how to solve problems, how to manage conflicts, how to create an environment where there's predictability and trust primarily between the adults and the kids. One thing we've learned is that if the nature of the interaction between the staff members and the students is more pro-active and positive, the greater the likelihood that students are going to identify their school, their classroom, their teachers as being trusted individuals for whom they can talk to. We're also learning that if the school climate is one that's more pro-active, positive and predictable, that the opportunity to learn about some of the crisis and safety management procedures that were discussed earlier is easier to teach, as well as for the students to adopt.

We're learning that academic success may be one of our greatest buffers against development of anti-social behaviors. We know that children who fail academically, combined with some of the community and family challenges that are out there significantly contribute to how students behave at school. We're very interested in kids whose academic profiles changed dramatically because we know that those kids are at risk of engaging in certain kinds of behaviors. And we know that it's very important for the school as a whole to do a good job of understanding how important the larger host environment is.

The big message we've learned is that if the large school environment is working well, that our ability to work with those kids who might have more significant emotional mental health issues, we can provide better supports for those students. But the academic, social behavior link, the academic student and behavior relationship is essential to the work that we do.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: One of the things that the first panel got into was sort of the elementary versus middle and high school kind of discussion. Can you expand on that and talk about maybe some effective programs you've seen in working with each particular grade span?

MR. ELLIS: Well, having two kids in high school, I think that's the most important place right now. But, you know, there's many programs as Delbert Elliott and others have compiled. We know that there are programs that allow us to do early screening and universal screening. Those screenings need to occur on a regular basis, so we know which kids are successful, which kids are having some challenges. We also know that targeted, more directed social skills instruction is more important for those kids who might have difficulties. We also know that peer mentoring programs are very effective for many students. However, it's very important that the adults be involved in that mentoring to keep both the peers and the mentors involved in the process. And we also know that having adults who are actively supervising inside these school environments in a positive way is very essential.

The discussion earlier about metal detectors and security cameras, those may be necessary evils, but as Delbert Elliott indicated, probably the really difference is how well and how—how well the school functions and what the nature of the staff members' interaction with their kids, are they greeting them in the morning, are we out in the hallways and so forth.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Can you just take one quick second—and obviously all of us who have children and who sat around with our kids in the last couple of weeks, you know, their kids say, you know, mom, is my school safe. And how do parents react to this, and what can they do to be enforcing about the kinds of things that your work nets out?

MR. ELLIS: Right. At our center we've collected quite a bit of what are considered best or effective practices. And from the parent perspective, the literature's quite clear. It's about knowing where your children are and what they're doing. It's about asking questions about how things are going at school. It's about connecting with your—if you're a parent like I am—with your teachers about how your child is doing a regular basis.

We know that the communication link is very important. Much of the work we do at our center though is making the schoolhouse, if you will, a welcoming place for parents because the parents aren't going to engage the schools if they have to walk through metal detectors, if they have to go through certain steps to get access to teachers and administrators. So we know making the school house a welcoming place is one of the best ways to link home and community with schools and vice versa. It's about having teachers and administrators in turn connecting back with kids, making communications back with the family.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Great. Next, our principal, Patrick Weil. Tell us about your experience and how you coped with the aftermath of that, what programs you put in place in your school.

MR. WEIL: I'll be happy to. First, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important conference, Madam Secretary.

We had an incident in my third week on the job in 2004 that was really truly uncharacteristic of our school. We had had several interventions in place under the leadership of our superintendent, Dr. Michael Benway. We had started the CASS program, which is part of the Project Ophelia out of Pennsylvania which is anti-bullying program where our high school students mentor middle school students. And the program has now reached down to the elementary levels as well. And in the aftermath of the incident, expanded the program to the 9th grade. So we have our seniors mentoring 9th graders. This year they actually designed and ran our orientation program prior to the start of school. So our focus has really been on discouraging bullying in particular, and really trying to encourage students to become actively involved and engaged with their classmates in a positive manner as opposed to kind of a more traditional role that upperclassmen have taken with freshmen.

We focused on several things. One is the relationship with the community. We have a very strong relationship with the Valparaiso community. We've traditionally had a pretty strong relationship with Valparaiso Police Department. And that relationship became stronger really in the aftermath of the incident.

To give you an example, a press conference which was held in the aftermath of the slashing was done in a joint manner with our superintendent and the chief of police. So we were both coming from the—talking from the same page, communicating with the media about the facts and our actions which we took in the aftermath.

Dealing with the event was a particularly challenging task because of—for me personally as a principal. This is the first time I'd been confronted with an incident of such strong violence that had such an impact on the school. And one of the things that we did with our students the day that they came back—and the incident happened on the day before Thanksgiving, so we had a long holiday weekend to kind of strategize—was to have the students meet in their first hour of class. We designed a writing activity where we gave them a chance to journal for about 15 or 20 minutes and just write about their emotions and feelings. Then we gave them an opportunity in the classroom to get together in small groups under the teacher's direction and just kind of process or debrief what had happened. And that actually proved to be a very productive activity because it gave our kids kind of an outlet, a chance to express their fears, their anxieties, their concerns, and do so under close supervision of our teachers.

We also focused really on developing kind of the hard aspects of school security, kind of typical things. We had a camera system in place. We've expanded it. We had an SRO program. We've expanded that by bringing off-duty Valparaiso Police Department officers into our building. So we have virtual police coverage every hour of the school day.

The county was also cooperative too in basing a probation officer last year for the first time in our school on a full-time basis. And he's helpful in several roles. Not only monitoring students that have become engaged in the Juvenile Justice system, but also, probably more importantly, we've been able to use him in the way of intervening with students who exhibit some of the characteristics of maybe getting involved with the system and being able to establish a relationship with them and kind of talk them through some of the decisions that they made be contemplating.

In addition to hard measures, we really focused on developing a relationship with our students. And I think it hasn't been a particular challenge because we have a teaching staff that I think has a feeling for students. Many of our students are successful. Our school is a national model school. It was recognized in 2004 as one of the top 30 high schools in the United States. And it was based on—we received that recognition based on the relationships that our teachers had with one another and the students have with one another as well, so we really tried to really focus on that and build upon that. And it's a constant challenge, particularly as we have new students coming into our system. Our school system and community is changing. So we don't always have the kids that grew up in the same community.

And getting to know those students and integrating them into the student population and into the culture of the school continues to be a challenge. We've looked at implementing programs where we set up students in situations—incoming students with students who have been in the school, kind of mentors as well, so that they have somebody to touch base with. Our guidance counselors have become much more active in terms of identifying and pulling those students in early. We built a relationship with the Valparaiso University in their school counseling program. And again, this came under the direction of—the leadership of our superintendent, to bring counseling interns into our buildings, so we've expanded the professional counseling staff that has contact with our students.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Tell us—what advice would you have for your fellow principals around the country? Obviously the principal is frequently a major focal point of an incident. You talked about how you had been on the job for three weeks. Probably school safety was the last thing on your mind the day that the incident happened. What advice would you have for principals? Fred talked about the need for support from the top. That may or may not be the case. What would you tell your fellow principals?

MR. ELLIS: I think one of the things that I've come to conclude is that many of us have been trained as instructional leaders, but I also think we have to be safety leaders as well. And keeping the notion of school safety always on the front burner, and it can be done in small ways just by making mention of a particular topic in a faculty meeting or in a public address announcements to students, enforcing rules consistently, making sure that no group of students has some special conferred status, and we avoid creating a class system amongst students I think is important.

I think that maintaining and expanding upon relationships within the community, working with community-based mental health agencies. To give an example, we forged a stronger relationship with our local mental health provider in the aftermath of the incident. They've been a particularly strong resource for us. They came in and gave care to the care-givers after the incident. In fact they're helping us sponsor a guest speaker who will be in our building tomorrow addressing issues of drug addiction, the biology of drug addiction, building upon those relationships as well.

But I really think just keeping it out in front of people because if it gets talked about, it's important. And that's what I think my role as principal is with regards to the issue.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Jim actually is from Texas, but now is in Arkansas. And he got involved after the Jonesborough incident in '98 I guess it was, the middle school shootings. And took it upon himself to form the WatchDOGS organization. So talk about that, Jim.

MR. MOORE: First of all, I'm honored to be here. Thank you for allowing me to participate.

Eight and a half years ago, just like today with all the media here, all the major media networks were rolling from my state because an 11-year-old and a 13-year-old thought the answer to their last problems was to bring weapons to school and to pull the fire alarm and watch as their fellow classmates went out into the playground. And I was at that school about nine months ago, and I saw where they were standing outside of the school, and they gunned down four kids and a teacher in cold blood. And I'm watching that as a father and just thinking about the great people in that community and what they might be thinking that night. And probably like every community that's gone through the tragedy, they have thought it never would happen here. It always happens over there, wherever that illusive over there is, but that night, it happened in that community. And I thought, you know, if it could happen there, it can happen in a lot of places and what are you going to do about it.

You know, in Texas, we have a great saying, cursing the darkness won't get your pickup truck out of the mud. You know, you're either going to do something about it or just talk bad about it. And I thought, you know, what can you as a father do to try and keep something like that from happening in your own child's community, in your own child's school.

So I began to think about the elementary school that our son attended at that time. He was in the second grade, and, you know, it was a great school. Our principal was just named Elementary School Principal of the Year. Just a lot of great things going on. But I thought what was good and what was bad, and who was there, and yet who was missing, and was there anybody missing that could make a positive impact that maybe could keep something like that from happening. And it really hit me that night that the one guy that was missing was me because I, like most men in America today, have fallen prey to the lie that says dads will be the breadwinner and moms will raise the kids. And

moms will go to school, and moms will do PTA and parent-teacher conferences. And what we as fathers have done over the last several generations is that we planted seeds of inattention and abandonment in our children. And because of that action, today our nation is reaping a harvest of fatherless families in violent schools, and it has to stop yesterday.

So we put together a program called WatchDOGS, and the acronym for DOGS stands for Dads Of Great Students. And we started our program eight and a half years ago. Today we have over 450 schools. We'll celebrate our 500th school this year in 30 some odd states. And we are—we have a twofold purpose. Number one, we want these fathers and father figures just to come to school as many times during the year as they can for two reasons. First of all, just to be an extra set of eyes and ears. You know, just to be an unobtrusive security presence. But second of all and just as important, to be dad, to be the father, to be the father figure. You know, there's a lot of great programs. And I know that everyone that's here today is looking for and longing for an answer, so what are we going to do? I firmly believe that—I love the answer from the sheriff. I believe the answer is to change culture. And you change culture by changing one heart at a time. And when you change a lot of hearts, you're going to change a lot of families and homes and cultures in this nation. And it really can be done.

But, you know, we just want fathers to come to school just to be dad, to be—you know, to eat with the kids, to play with them, to read to them, to flash cards, lunchroom duty, playground duty. Here's how we say it. Do whatever it takes to sow seeds of success into the lives of those students.

Three winners to the program. The dad's the first winner because when I go to school, I'm Michael Jordan on the playground, and I'm Albert Einstein in the classroom, and I'm Superman in the hallways.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: You?

MR. MOORE: Yeah, you know. Makes no difference how many times I got cut from my basketball team. I'm the best fourth grade basketball player there. And my level of self-esteem has elevated. I want to come back. In the eight plus I've done this, we've never—I've never had a father walk up to me and say, Jim, I was a WatchDOG and I hated it. I'm never coming back. I never expect that to happen.

But we have cards and e-mails and data that shows—you know, we did a survey of 314 dads, and 96 percent said I love this. I want to come back and do something this again. It was rewarding. Our level of self-esteem has elevated. And, you know, this not an all-male country club for the ladies here. We apologize to the ladies across the nation. All we want dads to do is rise to your level and to do what we've asked you to do for years.

The second winner is the child. And you know the studies. When dads disconnect, kids lose. And those kids automatically are thrown into a category that they had—no fault of their own, higher degrees of violence and gang activity and drug use

and suicide and poverty and depression. But the studies show when dads do connect in a positive way, then those kiddos have a higher chance of making more A's and interacting socially better, and being happier kids. And so the kids are a huger winner.

And the third winner is the community and the schools because you know what? We as fathers forgot what it's like to go to the 4th grade. And we think the fourth grade is like it was when we were in the 4th grade, or when we were a junior in high school. This is a K through 12 program. When we go back to school and spend time with our middle school or senior high or elementary student, we realize, wow, this is not how it was when I was there. And there's a brand new level of appreciation for what teachers do. And dads walk out of there going, gosh, these guys have got to get a raise, you know. I can't do this. I wouldn't do this. And all of a sudden there's a connection between the home and the teacher, and the home and the principal, and the principal meets the father for the first time in most cases. And so it's a win-win situation. And it's just—

You know, you talk about when things are tough and things are tight, this is the cheapest, most cost effective capital asset we can have is the volunteer base of fathers and father figures. And I'll say it is for father figures. Tonight in the greatest nation in the world and the greatest nation in the history of mankind, 25 percent of kids—40 percent of kids, 25 million kids, 40 percent of kids in this country will go to bed in a home without their dad. And those kids are not connected. So when I go to school, or when our dads that serve as WatchDOGS, some of them are here, when they go to school, not only do we connect with our own child, which deepens that relationship, but we probably spend the majority of the time with somebody else's kid who's not fortunate enough to have a father figure, who's one girlfriend breakup away from snapping, who is one bullying incident away from going off the edge and maybe—and here's the preventive side of what WatchDOGS does—maybe over time if you can just plant life and light and seeds of success into kids, then three years down the road when the chance for violence occurs, and there's a choice to be made, maybe somebody has paid the price to make a difference in this person's life where they won't choose violence.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: You know, your model is so simple that it can be put in place in, you know, rural America, inner city America, any place, any kind of school. You've talked about the—and you're getting the 500th school this year. Talk about the kind of training or resources, the tool kit, and what can people do to get—to do this in their own school?

MR. MOORE: Well, first of all, if anyone is interested, let me just direct you to the website It's fathers.com/WatchDOGS. [Fathers, plural.com/WatchDOGS](http://Fathers_plural.com/WatchDOGS). That's the first step. You know, we have national training conference calls several times a week. It's an 800 number, so there's no cost to the school just to plug into it. We've got dedicated, passionate people who really believe that fathers and father figures engaging with their children, even if they don't live with the birth mother, the fathers and father figures connected with their children on the right thing to do, the right course to take that will work and train those schools in school districts.

And you know, the last thing that a principal wants to hear is I've got a new program for you. You know, they don't want to hear it. But what we do is engage the fathers, and we call them Top Dogs at the school. We get the fathers to take the ownership of the program. So they recruit, and they remind the dads. And they take the leadership and they take the ownership, so the thing that the principal is led to do is just connect with that father, to know them, introduce themselves, and just to give them the responsibilities.

But our organization offers training for schools, training for dads, training for men to where we—you know, we just serve as a wake-up call for fathers and father figures. Nothing wrong with golf, but get off the golf course a little bit and get into the kids' school. Nothing wrong with fishing, but maybe come home from the lake one day early and get in the kids' school. Your kiddos are going to thank you, thank you, thank you many times over.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: So if there's a Top Dog, are you Big Dog?

MR. MOORE: My kids call me the missing dog sometimes, but—

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: All right, Chiara, off to you. I think we all know that students are critical to keeping our schools safe. You are the—the ones that are there, the eyes and ears attuned in to your classmates and so forth. Talk about your work in Florida and your involvement over the last four years.

MS. PERKINS: Well, I am a junior at Walton Senior High School, and I'm also the president of our Youth Crime Watch program. And as the president, I get together. I form meetings with a group. I go over the nine components. Some of our strongest components go over which is crime prevention, crime reporting, youth patrol and bus safety.

It's a youth-led program which is pretty good, so we just get together and we think of ways to stop crime, help our community and basically stuff like that.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: What would you tell students? How can they get involved? What can they do?

MS. PERKINS: If it's at your high school, just any administration should know about it, any administration member, a teacher, a fellow classmate that's probably involved. Just go up to them and ask. It's a free program to go and hang out with friends and think of ways to make your community and school better and to have fun while doing it with each other and interacting with adults, not as a child with an adult, but as a child with like—as equals, like as a human being. And we understand that we go through some stuff, and we try and help people with their problems. We talk and it's just a little—a group where kids get together and they can help.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Support. What kind of warning signs—and we’ve all heard about all the research about the fact that frequently a student did cry out, did call out, did ask for help, or give some sort of indication. Talk about what some of the warning signs are that students can watch for.

MS. PERKINS: I’d say if you know a friend—if you know a real good friend, and they start changing in how they behave, how they dress, they’re eating habits, how they act, their grades, if they stop doing stuff that you know that they love, simple stuff that—like hanging out and talking on the phone, happy one day, sad and depressed the next. These are all different types of signs that will let you know that, okay, something’s going on. I need to talk to my friend. I need to see if everything’s okay. And when you talk to them, and if you find out that something is wrong, that’s when you go ahead and, okay, I take certain actions, see if there’s anything that I can do, and then if there’s nothing that I can do as a friend by just talking, go ahead and talk to an adult, a parent, somebody that can actually help them.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Dr. Sugai, I think you have a new recruit for your teacher program. Thank you, Chiara. We have a few minutes for some questions from the audience. If there are folks that would like to call on our great panel. And let me put out a couple of ground rules here because there is so much interesting questions. If people could ask their question briefly and then step aside so someone else can come to the microphone so we can get as much input and feedback as possible. So over here on the right. Are you ready, sir?

MR. LAFARELO: Yes.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Tell us who you are, where you’re from.

MR. LAFARELLO: Curt Lafarello (sp). I’m the executive director with the School Safety advocacy council. Thank you for the invite today.

My question, law enforcement—my background is law enforcement, and law enforcement typically prepares its strategies based upon intelligence and trends as we’ve heard earlier today. And we’ve seen surveys each year indicate that serious school crime and violence often goes unreported to law enforcement. There’s currently no national mandate for school crime reporting. And typically we’re using a best guess scenario, and oftentimes no principal would want to be the principal of a persistently dangerous school. I’ve often said if I was the police chief, if I’m in a persistently dangerous town, the question may be then why are you the chief. I’d like to just ask the question to anybody on the panel if they feel a national school crime reporting mandate may assist us in gathering the facts we need to prepare our strategies, both in the law enforcement and the community perspective. Thank you.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Fred, why don’t you take a crack at that, and then Governor? I know those are the sorts of issues that you all dealt with at the state level clearly.

MR. ELLIS: Well, I know on your advisory committee, that is one of the questions we've been charged to look at in terms of reporting because the speaker's right. In terms of—it has always hit—it has historically been a problem in terms of accurate reporting for crime data and discipline data from schools. So I think there is some benefit with having standardization in terms of reporting incidents that occur on school. I think you have to be a little bit careful because, you know, I think educators are sensitive, of course, to reporting incidents that occur on the property.

But if you think about a school environment—is a shove in a cafeteria because you cut in front of me an assault? Should it be reported as an assault? You know, those kinds of delineations is where the problems occur. The devil really is in the details a lot of times. But again, having said that, I think there is some benefit to it, but I don't want to lock myself into the position because like I said I'm on the Secretary's committee, and it is a very good question that I'm anxious to explore on the part of that committee.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Governor, I know you all looked at a lot of that at the state level.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR NORTON: Yes, we have. Colorado's dedicated to transparency. Parents want to know how safe their schools are, and the only way that there can be accountability is if we have some kind of reporting structure that, as Fred mentioned, the criteria is well understood and there's definitions that make sense and our well publicized along standardized lines. So it's something that we're very, very interested in and beginning to have that dialogue about what constitutes assault or those kinds of things is important. But we feel that transparency is absolutely necessary, and parents should be able to have the choice of deciding what kind of schools they'd like to send their children to.

SECRETARY SPELLING: Over here on the left.

MR. SCOTT: My name is Darryl Scott, and I'm the—from Littleton, Colorado and the founder of Rachel's Challenge, which is a school program. My daughter, Rachel, was the first one to be killed in the Columbine tragedy. My son, Craig, will be on the next panel.

And as Jim was speaking earlier about cursing the darkness, right after the Columbine tragedy, that was my intention was to curse the darkness and to try to be on committees that would be against things. And I finally realized that was not the right approach. And so we decided the best way to fight the darkness was to light a candle.

And today we have 10 speakers that go into schools all across America, in Bermuda and New Zealand, Australia, and we speak to 30,000—or 60,000 kids currently every week. We have a training program for those children and also an evening with parents and community leaders. And I'm proud that Governor Norton is from our state. I appreciated what she said. And I really believe that we must—more than just having

programs available to schools, integrate the messages of kindness and compassion and morality, the way we treat each other, and this panel is represented itself well. Those things have to become a part of the everyday teaching and training in the schools by principals and teachers.

And so my question is how can we—because we see—we have seen school violence prevented. We've seen bullying stopped. We've seen a number of school shootings actually prevented because of our program. And we've also seen many suicides prevented through the e-mails, thousands of e-mails we get every day. And so my question is how can we get enough of the attention of the educational system to start re-incorporating in our daily lessons—if you look at the old textbooks from Noah Webster who actually did more than write a dictionary. He provided us with some of our original textbooks. And the seeds that Jim talked about, the seeds that were planted from elementary school on, kindness and compassion, through the stories—a math story for example, would say Mrs. Johnson dropped 16 apples. Joe saw her drop them, picked up seven. How many did Ms. Johnson have to pick up. So you were teaching math and kindness at the same time. How can we incorporate those things back into our educational system?

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Great question, Mr. Scott. And as he said, his son Craig, who is awesome, will be on our next panel. Dr. Sugai, why don't you take a crack at that, and then maybe Jim?

DR. SUGAI: Yeah, it's a great question. And the trick for us is how do you again arrange those environments so that social skills instruction, character traits and so forth are explicitly part of the curriculum as opposed to being informal?

Your comment's right. We teach academics from a very structured, formalized kind of perspective, yet we assume that kids will adopt best behavioral practices just on their own because it's the right thing to do. And we clearly know that that's not going to happen by itself. And so your comment about how do you bring compassion and respect into the school is really about, we think, about formalizing how social skills instruction, how do we actually teach respect and responsibility in a formalized way on a regular basis across the school?

One of the messages that I'd like to share with you is that it's really about oftentimes how we adults model those behaviors ourselves. So one of the first places to start is with dads and with principals and teachers about if we believe those are important things for our children to acquire. It's really about how we as family members, teachers and adults also model respect, responsibility, perseverance, punctuality and so forth, and making it part of the formal curriculum. That can be easily embedded within our instructional programs. We start on time, we talk about success academically as being building your own self-esteem and so forth. So we know those parts are important.

At the University of Connecticut and University of Oregon where I was, it's very clear to us that how we teach teachers, administrators, social workers, school

psychologists is heavily focused on sort of a reactive catch kids who are in trouble. It's focusing on academic instruction. And now we're really realizing that we need to prepare our administrators as was mentioned by Patrick, our teachers and so forth about what does it look like to have an effectively run classroom, how do we support all children behaviorally in a formalized way and don't assume that will happen by virtue of breathing the right air and so forth.

So I think your comments absolutely right. It's about creating those environments where we as adults really do foster in a formalized way some of those things that are important around our children. Excellent question.

MR. MOORE: I agree with George. And I think it's a great question. And I think the bottom line is you want to change—you know, I'm tired of people cursing the dark, and you said I'm tired of people just only talking about what is wrong and not being pro-active in making positive changes. So if you want changes within your school community, get those people in that will make changes.

For example, in our local schools a number of years ago, we got a huge population explosion. We passed a \$100 million millage to build nine or 10 schools in nine years, which to some communities doesn't sound like a lot, but to us, it was. The vote passed by just a little over 300 votes, and I would like to think that a lot of those 300 votes were dads like myself that 10 years earlier voted against a millage because we weren't in the schools to understand the need for that, and the need for growth. But those dads said, yeah, we've got to grow schools. We've got to have more schools. They've got to have smaller classrooms. So if you want to change the belief books legislation, you empower fathers and father figures and mothers and families to go in there and make those positive changes that will change culture.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Thanks, Jim. Over here on the right.

MR. WHITEHEAD: Yes. Hello, Madam Secretary. Thank you very much for inviting me today. My name is Jimmy Whitehead, and I grew up in Southeast Washington, D.C., and I attended Balou (sp) Senior High School where students killed every day. And I just had to say first that—and I'm going to get right to my question.

The first thing that's needed in all youths today in urban America and on Indian reservations also is the word God because it's illegal to say God in the public school nowadays.

Sprint-Nextel has started a program called U.S. Yellow School Bus. And this program is designed for communications because in emergencies, communications is what's most important, quick communications. What they call Inter-Operable Communications between parents and teachers and emergency responders and Homeland Security and law enforcement.

On the Indian reservations, those nations where I just came from in Spokane the other day, they have no communications at all for their schools. My question is in terms of the U.S. Yellow School Bus program and creating faster communications for emergency responders, not only in terms of domestic crisis, but in terms of national emergencies, these buses can also be used to transport citizens when we have Homeland Security emergencies and also protect children with immediate communications, who is it that I can meet with or speak to to work with Indian reservation initiatives for enhancing communications for emergencies and children's safety with the Yellow School Bus program? And if anybody would like to—

And private sector support is very important, like President Reagan said, private sector initiatives. What we need is the—policies and the discussion is good, but it takes money to implement these programs. And if we get America's corporations together and individual citizens to put up the money, not just the Government because the Government can't pay for it alone, we have to work together as citizens and as corporations to raise the money to protect their children so that we can pay for them to play. And everybody can check out the Yellow School Bus at www.usyellowschoolbus.org, and I would just like to know, Madam Secretary, who can I meet with about the Indian reservations and those children's safety?

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Yeah, we have a—as well as the Department of Interior, have folks who work on Indian schools. So we'll get you some contact information off-line.

MR. WHITEHEAD: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Thank you very much for your work. All right, over here on the left. Tell us who you are, sir.

MR. WIEBE: Yes, thank you, Madam Secretary, very much for the conference as well as for the opportunity to be here. I'm Keith Weibe (sp). I'm the president of the American Association of Christian Schools. And I'm privileged, along with several others out of the private school sector, to be a part of this. Joe Mati (sp) with Council of American Private Education, John Holmes, American Christian Schools International is sitting back there in the same row that I was. Obviously the school in Pennsylvania last week was among our number. It was a private school, not a public school. And I'm wondering maybe particularly from Mr. Ellis—I know ACS has a school in his county. We're not under the jurisdiction of public education, but obviously very concerned about security, safety, several million students educated in private schools, parochial Christian schools. How are they included in your plans, and what can we do in private education to help this? How can we be involved in this process?

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Great question. Thank you.

MR. ELLIS: That is a good question. In Fairfax County, we share our plans, our process, our thoughts, our applications with the private school sector on a couple of different levels. One is through our county which has, through its Office of Emergency Management, has contacts, has basically a contact list with private and parochial schools.

Also in the Washington area, there's a thing called the National Capital Region Council of Governments. On that group within COG, there is Security directors, sub-committee. I sit on that, and a representative from the Archdiocese of the Washington area is on that. And he obviously gets a lot of information from the participants in that subcommittee and likewise.

I would encourage private and parochial schools to make contact with our local Emergency managers, their local public school districts, and inquire about what's available, what can they share, how can they be a partner. We also, with a lot of churches and localities near our schools, actually enter into memorandums of understanding for basically mutual aid, if you will, or in terms of evacuations and what not, you come to our place, we'll come to your's kind of thing, and spell out the duties and responsibilities and expectations. But absolutely a partnership, but as a private school, you can't wait for the public to come to you. You need to knock on that door.

SECRETARY SPELLINGS: Thank you. Mr. Wiebe, and I'm going to ask my committee, the Safe and Directory Schools Committee that I've recently appointed to take a look at that issue on how we can be more coordinated. I think we have time for one more question, so, sir, on the right?

MR. ROSELY: Thank you, Madam Secretary. Jerry Rosely, principal, Salanko (sp) High School, southern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. We're in a situation where we deal with the state police. We don't have a local police force, and I do want to commend Troop J, which was the troop that dealt with the Amish shootings last week. Their level of communication with us is excellent. But part of that process is our Student Assistance program, and the funding for that, what would be the chance, Madam Secretary, of looking for additional funds for Student Assistance programs throughout the nation because these are groups of trained individuals that deal with the students that may be at risk, who deal with mental health assessments, and give us an extra edge in dealing and preparing for students and programs for students.

And in addition to that, what can be done at the teacher training level to bring training of this nature to teacher training programs throughout the country so that these people enter the workforce trained as opposed to learning when the event occurs? Thank you.

SECRETARY SPELLING: Great question. And in our little resource guide, there are many various websites here, including the Department of Education, which has some links to various resources that are available from the federal government. I assume you're talking about mentoring and peer training sorts of things at the student level. There are various pots of money that can be accessed for those sorts of programs. So we'll make sure you get some of that information.

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