



**SAFER
KIDS,
SAFER
SCHOOLS**

Final Report &
Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to engage school leadership and personnel and the broader community in exploring two urgent questions facing our region:

What can we do to reduce the chance of a school shooting in our community?

How can we create a school and community environment where all children are safe and thriving?





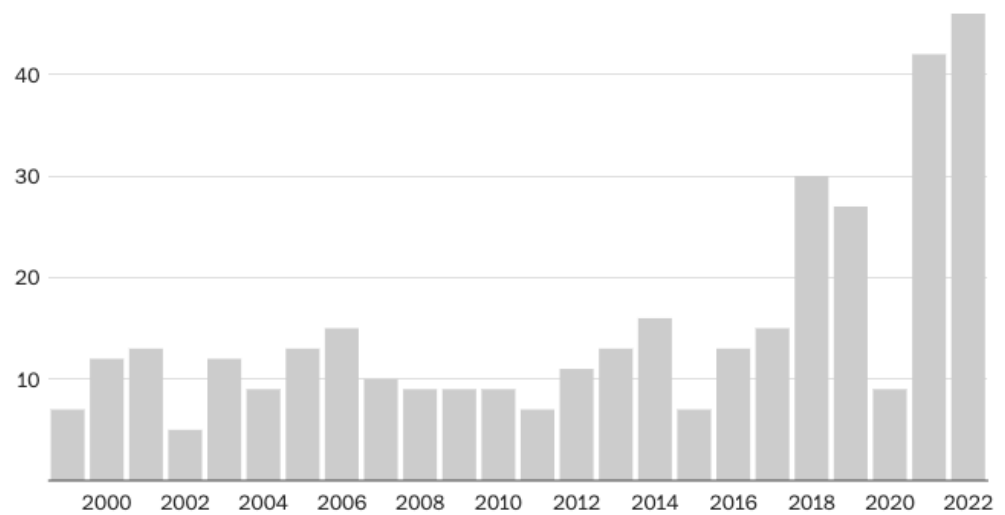
These questions deserve immediate attention, as school shootings in the U.S. occur with dreaded regularity.

*As of October 6, 2023,
there have been 389
school shootings in the
U.S¹.*

Since Columbine in 1999, more than 357,000 K-12 students have experienced school gun violence¹

The grim reality is that school shootings are on the rise.

School shootings by year

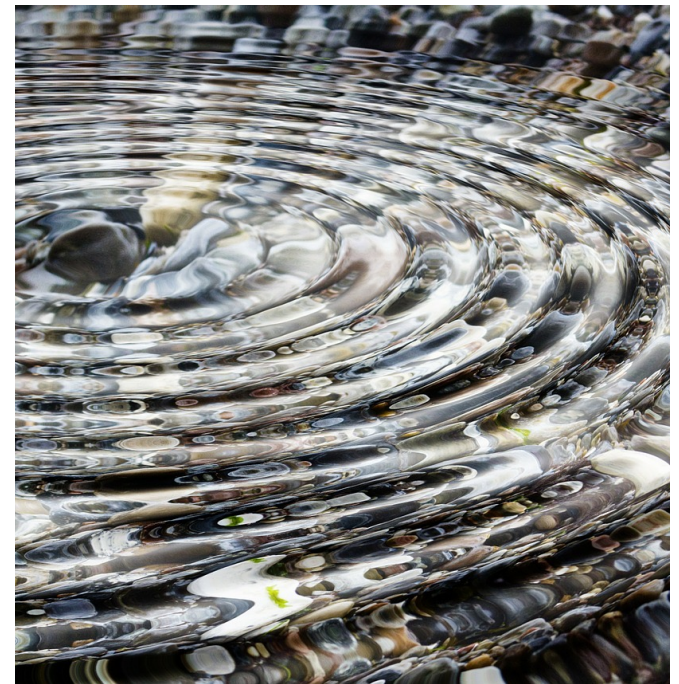


Notes: Data for 1999 begins with Columbine on April 20. Numbers dipped in 2020 largely due to schools not being in session because of the pandemic.

Graph copied from the Washington Post school shooting data base¹

Considering the broader impact and trauma of school gun violence on students, educators, first responders, and families—a **single bullet has the power to inflict lasting trauma on entire communities**

*For example, in a national survey conducted in December 2022, **forty-two percent (42%) of young adults ages 18-25 reported that gun violence in schools had had a significant negative influence on their mental health.***²



SAFER KIDS, SAFER SCHOOLS

In 2022 **Safer Kids, Safer Schools** was launched, forming an independent Task Force to understand **how to increase the safety and well-being of youth in our schools and community**

Included 30 concerned Traverse City Region citizens school personnel, students, parents, human service agency and community leaders

Explored the factors that contribute to school shootings by reading [The Violence Project](#), reviewing journal articles, state and federal reports, and participating in presentations by school safety experts, law enforcement and social workers and health professionals.

Identified recommendations to increase the safety and well-being of youth in our schools and community.

Safer Kids
Safer Schools
sought the
answers to
these
questions

What are the root causes of school shootings?

What is being done now in Traverse City to prevent a school shooting?

What more must be done to address this problem?

Who should be responsible for implementing solutions?




In exploring these questions, the SKSS Task Force decided to NOT debate the issue of gun control.

The task force was committed to moving the issue of school shootings further upstream and focused instead on how to prevent the intent to commit this violence.

Key Task Force Findings

- **We cannot fortify our way to safety.** Physical safety measures and procedures are important but not fail-safe.
- **The well-being of our young people is essential.** Factors that place students at risk of being a school shooter are childhood trauma, loneliness, bullying, mental health challenges, personal crisis and lack of community awareness and coordinated response.
- **Family/school/community engagement and a helping, compassionate approach are essential to caring for our young people.** The entire community must consider the well-being of our young people as a priority and responsibility. The future vitality of our community depends on it.



*Promoting physical-
mental-emotional well-
being among youth is
the greatest investment
we can make to prevent
a school shooting in our
community*

The logo features the text "SAFER KIDS, SAFER SCHOOLS" in white, bold, sans-serif font, arranged in four lines. The text is set against a background of two overlapping speech bubbles, one light orange and one slightly darker orange, all contained within a larger orange square.

**SAFER
KIDS,
SAFER
SCHOOLS**

To promote community awareness about preventing school shootings and engage community members in sharing ideas and proposing solutions , the SKSS Task Force held six Community Forums in 2023

A total of 135 community members participated in these sessions

Participants identified and discussed challenges, root causes and barriers to student well-being


Participants identified and prioritized initiatives in the schools and throughout the community that could lead to safer kids and safer schools.

This report summarizes the key findings and recommendations from the task force and the broader community. Two questions are answered in the following slides:



What are the Root Causes of School Shootings?

What can we do in this region to prevent school shootings?

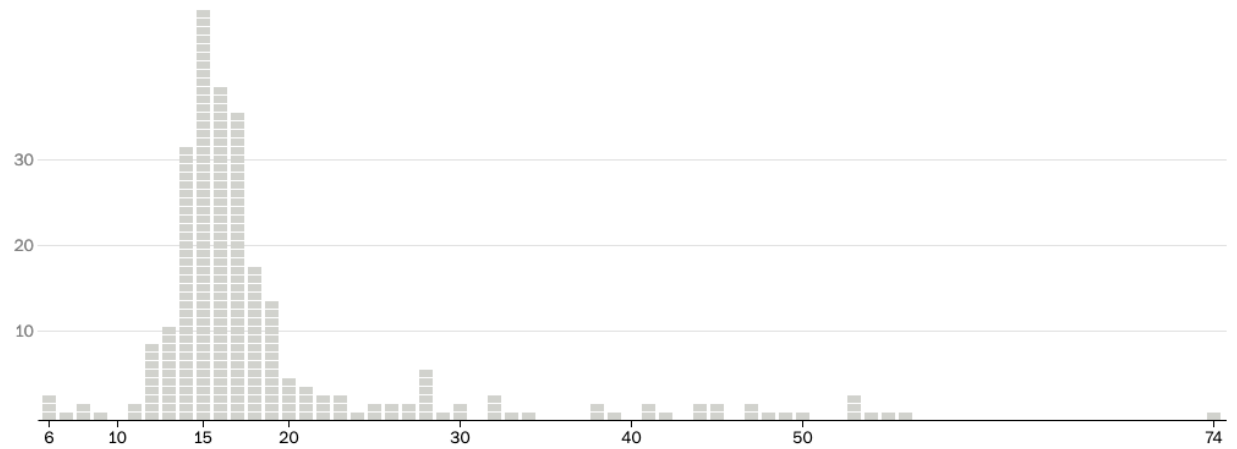
What are the root causes
of school shootings?



Preventing school shootings requires us to understand the risk factors associated with someone becoming a school shooter



The median age of a school shooter is 16 years old



114 shooters with unknown age not included

Graph copied from the Washington Post school shooting data base¹

Common Risk Factors Associated with School Shootings

Researchers with [The Violence Project](#) have conducted extensive research on mass shooters.

Their analysis suggests that many mass shooters, including school shooters, experienced a similar set of challenges and risk factors.³

Traumatized

Trauma comes in many forms, including abuse, neglect, and economic hardship. Toxic stress can negatively change the brain development of children and youth. Toxic stress can result from issues like living in impoverished neighborhoods, experiencing food insecurity, being homeless, experiencing racism, limited access to support and medical services, and living in homes with abuse, violence, mental health problems, neglect, substance abuse, and other instability.

In Crisis

A crisis, from a failed relationship to school/personal failures to significant family disruption can instigate violence.

Mental Health Challenges

Many school shooters experienced mental health challenges. These needs were often unmet, as the individuals were not connected to needed services and supports.

Bullied

Many school shooters experienced significant bullying at school or in the broader community.

Lonely

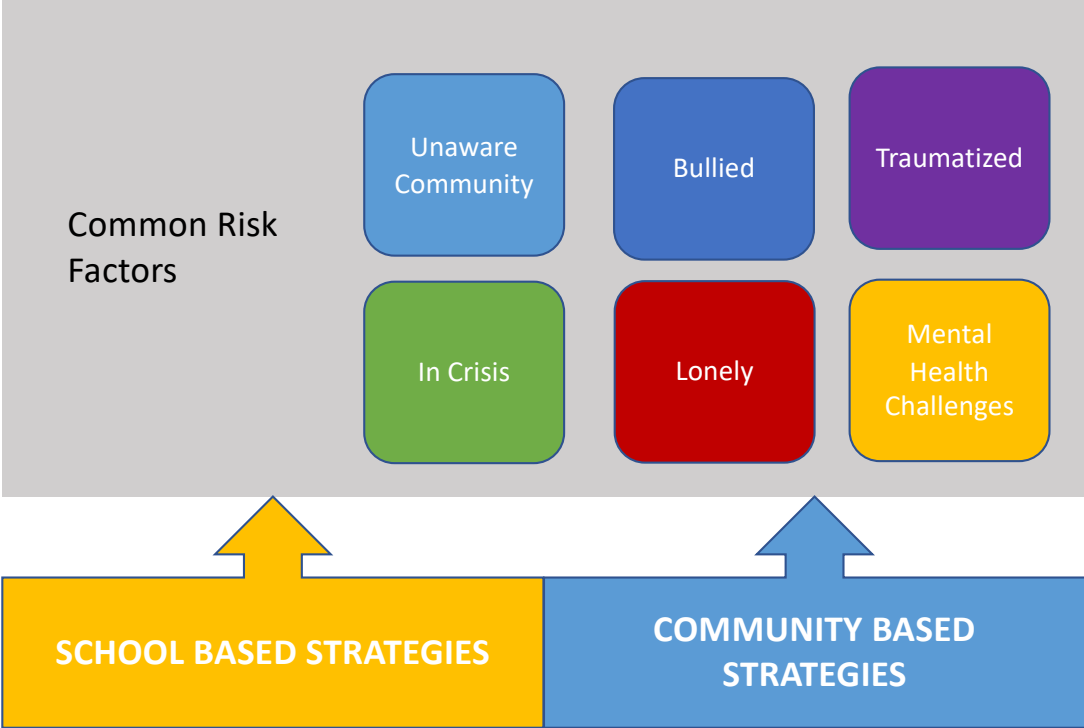
School shooters often report feeling lonely; they are often described by others as loners and isolated.

Unaware Community

In many communities where school shootings occurred, residents, family members, law enforcements and school personnel were unaware of the growing number of challenges school shooters were experiencing, were unfamiliar with the root causes of school shootings, and were unaware of how or where to report concerns.

What can we do in this region
to prevent school shootings?

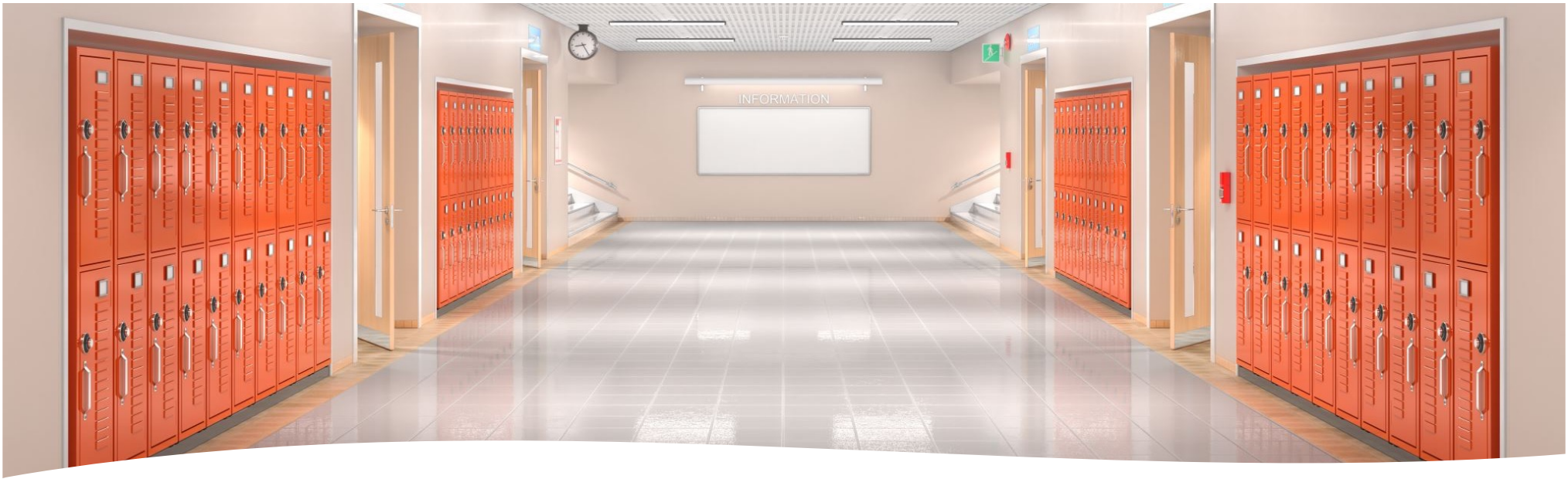
Tackling these common risk factors requires school AND community-based strategies



It is important to note that the residents involved in the community forums and other SKSS presentations are very eager to work towards building a community where all children thrive and to partner with the schools in their efforts to create spaces where all children are safe and succeed.

Recommended School-Based Strategies

It is important to first recognize the efforts already underway at TCAPs to prevent school shootings



TCAPS has implemented significant improvements in school safety

- Facility safety measures, staff training, parent and student communication systems and more have been implemented to ensure safe schools and safe kids.

TCAPS has also made substantial progress in addressing student safety and security through the expansion of critical mental health supports




Added significantly to their mental health “team” and launched the Child & Adolescent Health Center at West Middle School





Developed a targeted, intentional, 3-year professional development plan to ensure a comprehensive and uniformed clinical approach to supporting students' mental health.



Worked to align their response to students who behave in a potentially threatening manner to those of the United States Secret Service to ensure they are appropriately intervening and supporting students in order to disrupt the typical behaviors seen when a child engages on a pathway to violence.



TCAPS should continue to monitor the efficacy of these efforts, particularly the extent to which the expanded mental health efforts are meeting student needs



What other actions might TCAPS take to *prevent* a student from becoming a shooter?

How can we identify a child who is isolated, bullied, struggling, or otherwise at-risk of withdrawing or lashing out?

How can we help that child feel cared for, connected, and supported?

Recommended school-based strategies



CREATE A CARING AND
CONNECTED SCHOOL
COMMUNITY.



EXPAND STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT
OPPORTUNITIES.



EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH
SUPPORTS AND PROGRAMS
WITHIN SCHOOLS.



ENHANCE MENTAL HEALTH
SCREENING AND CRISIS
INTERVENTION EFFORTS.

These solutions were identified in the community forums held by SKSS. They also reflect best practices identified by the CDC, the Violence Project, and other national initiatives focused on preventing school violence.

Recommendation Notes

- TCAPS is already pursuing a diverse set of strategies to build a caring school culture and to promote student physical and emotional safety.
- The recommendations on the following slides were identified to further enhance these efforts. These solutions were developed in the community forums held by SKSS; many came from current school personnel, concerned parents, and current students. They also reflect best practices identified by the CDC, the Violence Project, and other national initiatives focused on preventing school violence and promoting student well-being.



CREATE A CARING AND CONNECTED SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

Building a cohesive, supportive and caring school environment is key to preventing school shootings. According to the [National School Climate Center](#), school environments are cohesive & caring when:

It is safe to talk. Students feel safe to talk to each other and to staff

Trust is abundant. There is mutual trust and respect among students and school staff

Families & communities are connected to schools. There is on-going dialogue and relationships with family and community partners

School Staff are encouraged & supported. School staff have the resources, training and support needed to build this environment in and outside the classroom

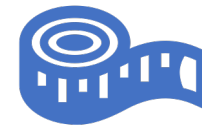
What needs to be in place to create a caring and connected school environment?



Children and youth have the skills needed to be self-aware and caring of others



All students have a positive connection with a supportive adult within the School



Schools monitor their school climate and improve, where needed.

When these conditions are in place, school safety increases and bullying decreases.

Strengthen the skills children and youth need to be self-aware and caring of others

- The possibility of violence increases when youth have under-developed or ineffective communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, empathy, impulse control, and emotional regulation skills.
- Research has well demonstrated that building youth's interpersonal, emotional, and behavioral skills can help reduce youth violence and promote academic success.⁴

Potential Strategies:

Embed opportunities for all students to learn these skills across school activities and curriculum. See the [CDC's guide to prevention](#) for options.

In addition to your social emotional learning curriculum, consider other classroom activities designed to support empathy across k-12. See the resources available at the [Making Caring Common Project](#). Their [Circle of Concern](#) curriculum is one example.

Support anti-bullying messages, campaigns, and students/staff training. Explore the resources available through the national [Stop Bullying initiative](#).

Ensure All Students have a Positive Connection with a Supportive Adult within the School

Potential Strategy:

The [Relationship Mapping Project](#) at Harvard is designed to connect students with supportive adults within the school community.

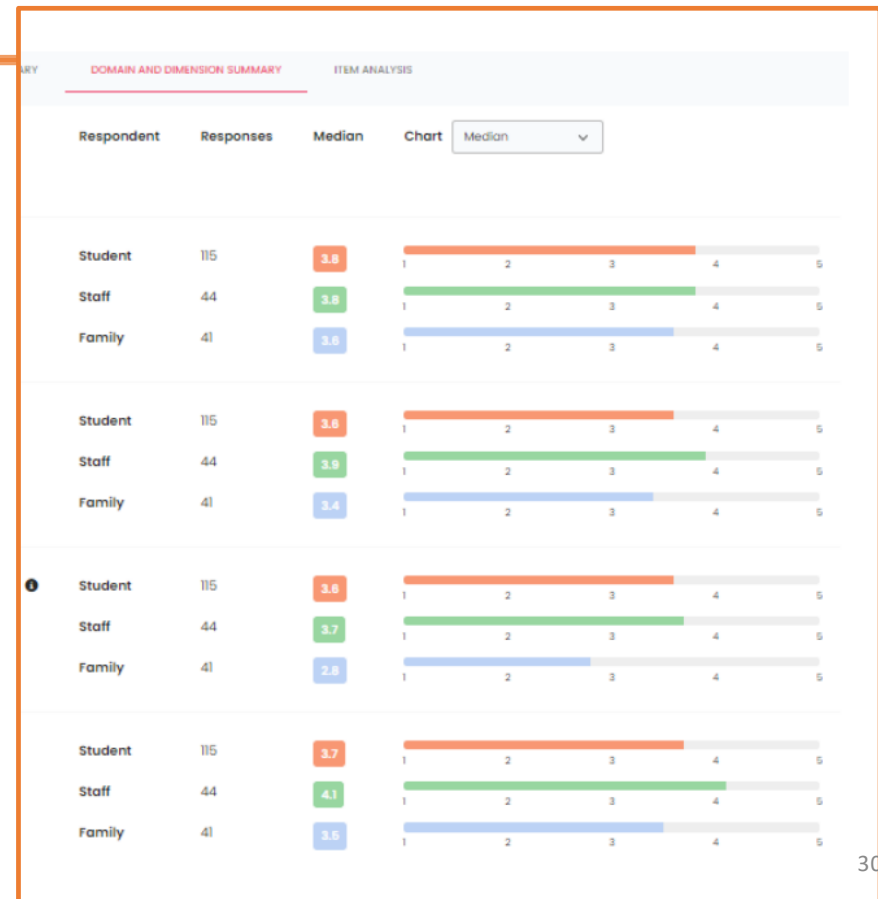
“There may be nothing more important in a child’s life than a positive and stable relationship with a caring adult. For students, a positive connection to at least one school adult – whether a teacher, counselor, sports coach, or other school staff member – can have tremendous benefits that include reduced bullying, lower drop-out rates, and improved social-emotional capacities.⁵”

The Harvard Graduate School of Education

Monitor your school climate to assess how students and staff feel about the school. Incorporate this data into your improvement process.

Potential Strategy:

- The National School Climate Center⁶ has the [Comprehensive School Climate Inventory](#) to assess five dimensions of school climate:
 - Safety
 - Teaching and Learning
 - Interpersonal Relationships
 - Institutional Environment
 - Leadership & Efficacy
- The image on the left provides an example page of the dashboards schools receive after completing the survey.



How can you further create a caring & connected school community?



Promote connection and involvement with all families across all schools.

Use [home visits](#) to connect with harder-to-reach families



Create opportunities for students to care for and support each other

Explore "[We Dine Together](#)" a national student-led movement to create more connections in schools

Expand use of buddy programs, like the Buddy Bench, where elementary age students are assigned to each other

Expand student-to-student mentoring opportunities



Create opportunities for teachers to better understand student's emotional and connection experiences

Start each school day in smaller groups to check in (e.g., Glen Lake schools)

Use an anonymous notes process for students to answer the question: What do you want to share? Staff can identify who is struggling.

Every Friday, ask students who they want to sit next to next week; teachers use nominations to identify who is not included by other students.

Do a regular [student well-being check](#), such as the one offered by the Harvard Graduate School of Education



EXPAND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Three types of [student engagement](#) are important to student success and school safety.

- **Behavioral Engagement:** Students' academic involvement and participation in learning activities
- **Emotional Engagement:** Affective attitudes towards peers, the school, teachers, and classroom
- **Cognitive Engagement** – Students' investment in learning

These engagement types reinforce each other. When students feel a sense of school belonging (emotional engagement) they are more likely to participate in classroom activities (behavioral engagement).

Engagement Matters.

When students have high levels of the three types of engagement, they are more likely to be academically successful and have improved well-being.

Low student engagement is linked to several negative outcomes including school dropout and violence.⁷

How can you further expand student engagement opportunities?



Make participation in student clubs and sports even more viable and desirable for all students

- Reduce or eliminate cost and transit barriers.
- Expand club options to meet students' diverse needs; encourage all students to participate in at least one activity
- Monitor student engagement to ensure students from at-risk families can and do participate in school opportunities
- Bring more high school extra curriculars into middle school



Leverage community volunteers to support engagement

- Expand engagement of grandparents and retirees to support youth involvement
- Consider engaging volunteers to transit students to activities
- Intentionally connect student groups with community mentors
- Invite community members to present on trades and/or hobbies



Promote youth leadership and leadership opportunities within each school and across the district.

- Support youth involvement in leadership training academies offered across the state
- Encourage student engagement in local government (e.g., attend local government meetings)
- Expand youth leadership groups such as a Jr. ROTC group
- Intentionally recruit students who are less engaged for leadership opportunities



Support teachers in their efforts to create more engaging classroom environments

- Share and promote existing effective engagement practices and encourage communities of practices to identify new ways to nurture engagement
- Monitor the implementation and impact of TCAPS new "away for the day" cell phone policy



EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS AND PROGRAMS WITHIN SCHOOLS.

School-based and school-linked mental health services reduce barriers to treatment and play an important role in helping children and youth get help early.

Early treatment is effective and can help young people stay in school and promote their wellbeing. Untreated or inadequately treated mental illness can lead to school dropout, unemployment, substance use, violence, arrest, incarceration and early death.

Many mental health conditions first appear in youth and young adults, with about 50% of all conditions beginning by age 14.⁸

Youth are 6X more likely to complete mental health treatment within a school setting than a community setting.⁹

How can you further expand mental health supports and programs within schools?

TCAPS is making important progress towards expanding mental health supports within its schools.

Moving forward, TCAPS could:

- Monitor use of these expanded MH supports and reallocate and expand resources, if appropriate
- Track the impact of these expanded MH supports
- Ensure equity in their availability across TCAPS schools
- Continue to expand partnerships with local agencies
- Assess the quality of mental health supports and programs using the [School Quality Mental Health Assessment Tool](#) developed by the [National Center for School Mental Health](#)



ENHANCE MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING AND CRISIS INTERVENTION EFFORTS

Schools play an important role in helping children and youth get help early. School staff — and students — can learn to identify the warning signs of an emerging mental health condition and how to connect someone to care.

Mental health screening is increasingly being considered by schools as a mechanism to identify and support the mental health needs of students.

Schools also need to have robust crisis intervention efforts in place — so they are ready when a crisis emerges.

Mental Health screening improves the delivery of Tier 1, 2 & 3 services, connects students to needed services, improves student wellbeing, and is cost-effective.¹⁰

How can you further enhance mental health screening and crisis intervention efforts?

TCAPS is also making important progress towards improving its crisis assessment and intervention efforts.

Moving forward, TCAPS could:

- Universally screen students to identify those who are at risk, experiencing MH challenges and trauma, and feeling isolated.
 - Enroll in [SHAPE](#) where you can access several free school-based student mental health assessment tools.
 - Share the data with school personnel and community partners to strengthen the mental health services and supports array
- Assess the efficacy of current and planned crisis identification, intervention, and follow-up supports within schools.
- Explore the potential value of adopting school-based crisis intervention techniques advocated for by the Violence Project, including its [Off-Ramp R-Model](#) for crisis intervention.¹¹

Potential Roles and Responsibilities for Creating Safe Kids, Safe Schools

School leadership, and all school personnel, play a critical role in creating a safer school where all children thrive. The list of recommendations on the next two slides identify how all school leaders and staff can support the goals of physical and emotional safety and prevention strategies.

This list is not intended to be comprehensive, as we know that the creative energy of educators will identify other viable strategies as they work to meet these emerging challenges.

It may seem that asking schools to increase their emphasis on student mental well-being is adding “one more thing” to their already full plates and asking them to, once again, fill gaps not addressed by families, communities or other social institutions. That is why the recommendations include how schools could more easily receive help from the community.

Recommendations developed by the Quinns.

Governing Board Roles:

Make student safety and wellbeing a high priority, explicitly reflected in their strategic and annual planning processes. Each board should hold their CEO responsible for establishing specific goals in this area, with metrics attached to those goals, to be reported to the board and public on an annual basis.

Ensure that a physical security assessment is conducted on a regular basis by an external, professional assessor. Recommendations from the assessments should then be addressed in the planning and budgeting processes.

Seek to enhance funding for counselors or other staff whose sole focus is working with at-risk youth. Funding could be sought through the legislative process, grant opportunities, and community foundations and endowments.

School CEOs/Superintendents/ Presidents' Roles:

Work with staff in their planning process to establish specific goals, strategies, and metrics for enhancing student safety, providing for early identification of at-risk youth, and addressing their needs.

Ensure that emergency plans are developed, coordinated with local officials, reviewed on a regular basis, and effectively communicated to all concerned.

Establish a Student Wellbeing Fund that can provide needed short-term or emergency resources for at-risk students.

- Administered by a committee of school staff and community members, with responsibility for soliciting donations and developing guidelines for usage. One potential use may be financial assistance so a student can participate in extracurricular activities (fees, equipment, BATA passes for transportation, etc.).
- Easily accessed by principals on short notice, without bureaucratic hoops and hurdles
- Perhaps administered by a non-profit organization to avoid challenging accounting regulations to which districts may be subject.

Develop an online system where community members can easily donate to a specific need in a school or volunteer to assist in addressing a specific need that supports student well-being. Principals can also post specific financial or volunteer needs, such as for student mentors.

Principals' Roles:

Every principal should work with faculty and staff in their respective buildings to develop an "audit" system of early identification. At the beginning of each school year, students would be identified who are at risk of social isolation, academic failure, bullying, or other factors leading to potential behavioral problems or academic failure.

For those students, staff members would identify the individuals' specific needs and how those needs might be addressed. Staff members who are willing would be assigned to be responsible for positive daily interaction with, guidance, nurturing, and support of those youth. Student mentors could also assist with support.

The principal should develop metrics to ensure the early identification program is meeting its goals and documenting support provided.

Principals will use information from this early identification system to post their needs for volunteers and supportive funding, as described above.

Principals can ensure that an OK2SAY program is in place in their school, complete with communication and training.

Principals should provide an education plan each year for all students that includes information on:

- How do I take care of myself?
- How can I get help for myself if needed?
- What can I do if I spot signs that someone else needs help?

Teachers and Staff Roles:

Every teacher and every school employee should consider it their responsibility to ensure that every child they interact with experiences a friendly, supportive and nurturing adult.

Teachers and other staff are closest to the students, and therefore are the "first eyes and ears." They should receive information and training on:

- Signs of students at risk
- Support they can provide
- How to alert others who may provide additional support

Teachers should plan instruction to include positive student to student connections. This would be an explicitly intentional part of their daily/weekly/monthly instructional planning.

Recommended Community- Based Strategies

Keeping students safe is not just the responsibility of schools. Communities also play a critical role in promoting child and youth well-being and preventing school shootings.

The following slides offer several strategies identified in the community forums held by SKSS. They also reflect best practices identified by the CDC, the Violence Project, and other national initiatives focused on preventing school violence and building healthy communities and schools.

Recommended Community-Based Strategies



CREATE A MOVEMENT TO
DEVELOP A CARING AND
CONNECTED
COMMUNITY.



PROMOTE COMMUNITY
AWARENESS OF RISK AND
APPROPRIATE RESPONSES.



REDUCE AND RESPOND TO
TRAUMA.



ENGAGE AND EMPOWER
YOUTH.



EXPAND AVAILABILITY OF
ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY
RESOURCES AND
SUPPORTS.



ENHANCE EARLY
INTERVENTION EFFORTS.



CREATE A MOVEMENT TO DEVELOP A CARING AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Children, youth and families thrive when they are cared for and connected to their communities. Such caring and connection is more likely to happen when communities make it clear that they value all children and make it easy for residents to find and offer support.

How can we nurture a caring and connected community?

1

Make TC known for how much it cares for children

- Develop a campaign: TC Values it Kids. Include in Traverse Connect website. Include ways adults can value kids.
- Develop podcasts on TC neighborhoods that highlights how TC cares for its kids
- Redesign the community/system to show that TC cares about kids (just as TC redesigned to support tourism & alcohol)

2

Expand mentoring opportunities across the community

- Ensure every child has a positive relationship with an adult. Connect children to mentors. Connect more boys to mentors and engage more men in mentorship.
- Ensure mentors are non-judgmental
- Expand # of recess coaches and referees
- “Adopt a PTO”: Retired residents mentor/support school PTOs
- Make it easier for retired individuals/seniors to volunteer/help kids

3

Create a sponsorship group: “Friends of TC Kids”

- Creating a funding/sponsorship group. Include highly resourced individuals to raise money for youth-focused projects and to fund at-risk youth involvement in sports and activities

Tackle Loneliness by Building Intentional Community Connections

Frome, England has developed an innovative and successful approach to tackling loneliness¹². They have individuals placed throughout the community who are designated connectors:

- **Health connectors** - link people to community groups and services ranging from home heating advice to help with hearing aids and cooking lessons. Similar to community health workers here in the TC region.
- **Volunteer Community Connectors** – Diverse residents, from cafe owners, taxi drivers and other ordinary residents who have been trained on how to advise their friends and neighbors about available community groups and services.
- **Digital connectors** - Connect residents to digital training and free Wi-Fi or donated electronic devices
- The [Talking Bench](#), where health and volunteer community connectors visit once a week to talk to anyone



PROMOTE COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF RISK AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSES

Community members are often not aware of the risks associated with potential school shootings. They also often do not know how to effectively report their concerns.

An important part of preventing a school shooting involves developing a reporting system and promoting community awareness of this system and the potential signs of a shooting risk.

How can you further promote community awareness of risk and appropriate responses?



Have clear protocols and processes for reporting concerns.

See something=say something

- Need to clarify to whom one says something
- Clarify through a campaign : “I am a community member. I have a concern. Who do I talk to?”
- Explore if OK2SAY would work with the community.



Launch a media campaign to educate the community

Keep message simple: “If you see a child who is alone, unloved, sad...” “TC loves all of its kids”

Do a community reading/book student using the Violence Project book.

Help expand awareness and normalize talking about this, seeking support and information

Engage families starting with Head Start and Early Childhood Ed settings

Actively outreach to diverse populations (e.g., tribal, Hispanic, LGBT)



Ensure relevant community stakeholders are trained in protocols recently released by MI state police



Create more “early identification” and referral opportunities across the community

Physicians do mental health screenings and referrals

Promote more data sharing to strengthen ability to identify risks



REDUCE AND RESPOND TO TRAUMA

Simply put, children, youth and adults who are exposed to toxic stress and trauma have worse health and behavioral health outcomes.

This stress/trauma emerges from experiences of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction during childhood and other negative social determinants of health (food, income and housing insecurity for example).

This trauma can create physical, emotional and neurological shifts that lead to increases in chronic illnesses, mental health and substance abuse problems, and health-risk behaviors.¹³

More positive outcomes emerge when communities focus on actively promoting positive childhood experiences that contribute to healthy development and well-being, as well as preventing or mitigating the effect of ACEs and other negative social determinants.¹³

How can we reduce and respond to the trauma experienced by children and families?



Reduce economic hardships by lifting families out of poverty.

Pursue multi-generational economic strategies that address needs of parents (e.g., job training) and children (child care and after school programs) so both can succeed.



Create a Trauma-Informed Community by integrating trauma-informed policies, practices, and procedures across all sectors.

Integrate [ACES](#) (Adverse Child Experiences) screening into behavioral and physical health appointments and

Build a regional trauma-informed network to shift mindsets, develop local capacities and promote development of a trauma-informed culture. [The Virginia Trauma-Informed Network](#) is a great example of one such infrastructure.



Reduce child abuse



Promote Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE). This research-based framework encourages four types of positive experiences that can mitigate the impacts of trauma. ¹³

Being in nurturing, supportive relationships.

Living, developing, playing, and learning in safe, stable, protective, and equitable environments.

Having opportunities for constructive social engagement and to develop a sense of connectedness.

Learning social and emotional competencies.



ENGAGE AND EMPOWER YOUTH

Empowered and engaged youth have the ability to voice their opinion, influence the decisions and spaces that matter to them, and have the agency and opportunity to pursue what matters most to them.

An empowered young person recognizes their capabilities, self-determination and worth.

Youth empowerment and engagement has been linked to a variety of positive youth development outcomes, improved academic outcomes, increased sense of belonging, increased confidence, reduced violence and more positive health and wellbeing.^{14, 15}

How can we engage and empower youth in this region?



Provide diverse youth with opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to take on leadership roles within the broader community



Provide opportunities for children and youth to voice their ideas, opinions and perspectives. Incorporate this perspective into community solutions and designs



Expand opportunities and spaces for youth to have recreation and meaningful community engagement experiences



Launch a community campaign that promotes engagement

Consider a community wide focus on limiting smart phones (only after age 14) and instead promote the use of flip phones

Expand Youth Engagement through Youth Leadership Development



POTENTIAL STRATEGY

[Michigan Youth Leadership](#) (MYLead)

MYLead focuses on **positively transforming the lives of Michigan youth** by motivating and enabling them to make a positive impact on their communities through leadership and service. MyLead hosts conferences and other programs that teach **enhanced self-confidence, critical thinking, creative problem-solving, a desire to serve others**, goal setting, public speaking, ways to motivate others, and more.

Promote Youth Engagement in Community Improvement Activities

POTENTIAL STRATEGY

Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES)

is an evidence-based program that empowers youth to make positive changes in their communities, to work with adults to support their efforts, and to reduce youth violence

YES includes:

- youth empowerment activities
- training for adult staff and volunteers
- community development projects that youth design and implement with support from adults



EXPAND AVAILABILITY OF ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

Safe and thriving children, youth and their families have access to the services, resources and supports they need, when they need them.

A lack of available essential resources within the Grand Traverse Region, such as affordable housing and childcare and available mental health providers, often means critical needs are not met.

A lack of awareness of available resources and how to connect with them also impedes access to needed services.

Issues of affordability and available transit can impede access as well.

How can we expand availability of essential community resources and supports?



Recruit more mental health professionals to the region

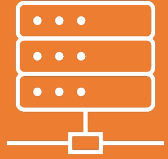
Offer social services programming at Career Tech to expand pipeline



Expand community support for teaching social emotional competencies at schools



Expand community awareness of available programs, supports and resources



ENHANCE EARLY INTERVENTION EFFORTS

Early intervention services can have a significant impact on a child's ability to learn new skills and overcome challenges and can increase success in school and life.

Early intervention services that provide parenting education and support can also promote healthier, more stable families where children and youth can thrive. Such programs promote can reduce youth violence and promote healthier behaviors.¹⁶

Too often, early intervention services are unavailable due to wait lists, access issues, and affordability.

How can we enhance early intervention efforts in the region?



Provide expectant and new parents with support and mentoring opportunities

Expand home visiting and other education and support programs for pregnant teens and new parents


Expand parenting education and support. In some countries, new moms have to participate in support groups. Check out [LENA](#), an innovative approach to promoting literacy develop and positive adult connections.





Expand Early Intervention Programs and Supports across the community

Assess needs and gaps

Identify who is currently not able to access needed services



Caring for the well-being of youth and identifying young people in crisis is our civic responsibility. Keeping our kids safer at school and in our community requires a new form of community literacy and action. Together we must support this work with compassion, time, energy and resources. The challenges are too great and the stakes are too high to ignore.



Citations

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