

As the conversation about how to improve safety in our schools and our communities continues across our state and the nation, we endorse the following principles as guidelines for practitioners, policymakers, and all those who work with children or on behalf of them in our school systems.

JJAG Statement of Principles to Sustain and Improve School Safety

1. The social/emotional well-being of students is as important as their academic performance. Together they contribute to a healthy school environment that is essential to the reduction of school violence.
2. Everyone who comes in contact with students and the school system has a responsibility to help create and sustain a healthy school environment and to ensure a student's social/emotional well-being. The school should ensure that every student has a relationship with an adult within their academic setting.
3. The school environment, culture, approach to discipline, and interface with the community is crucial to the well-being of all students, and particularly to those students who are alienated from the school program and those with behavioral and/or mental health issues.
4. Schools and communities are responsible for determining how they will collaborate to create a systematic approach to school safety.
5. To create a healthy school environment and reduce violence, schools and communities should:
 - Strive to adopt comprehensive, evidence-based and promising practices approaches that reduce violence by successfully addressing conflict and resolving problems; identifying youth at-risk early; providing behavioral health and wrap-around services; and building on the strengths of families and young people seeking the education and skills to lead safe and fulfilling lives.
 - Prioritize training for those working in schools and with students, including law enforcement personnel and school resource officers, in developmentally sensitive, collaborative, proactive, restorative, positive, relationship-oriented, and communication-enhancing approaches that help students with behavioral challenges.
 - Reject policies and practices that have the unintended consequence of increasing the number of youth who unnecessarily come in contact with law enforcement, the courts, and the justice system.
 - Adopt policies and practices that are structured to continually evolve based on new data and community needs.
 - Adopt policies and practices that offer students behavioral, social, and emotional supports and learning programs.
 - Adopt policies and practices that include substance abuse prevention.