PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST

In a recent column (March 13, 2018), the New York Times columnist David Brooks noted that "Good leaders make good schools." He observed:

"When you learn about successful principals, you keep coming back to the character traits they embody and spread: energy, trustworthiness, honesty, optimism, determination. We went through a period when we believed you could change institutions without first changing the character of the people in them. But we were wrong. Social transformation follows personal transformation."

The **PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST** enumerates the variety of Principal initiatives that can be conducted at the school-wide level (Primary Prevention), or with identified "high risk" students and their families (Secondary Prevention), and with students who have evidenced persistent behavioral problems and require more intensive wrap-around services and crisis management interventions (Tertiary prevention). This Checklist can be viewed as a type of **PRINCIPAL REPORT CARD**. It highlights the need "to pay attention to small things".

Primary Prevention

1. Principals should be a visible presence in greeting all students and parents visiting the school.

2. Conduct a formal review of all safety policies and school emergency plans and practices. For example, establish a regular schedule for safety drills.

3. Conduct a school safety assessment and identify any safety weaknesses and strengths and correct deficiencies.

4. Provide staff training on school safety, emergency management and bullying.

5. There are staff members trained in emergency first aid and CPR, and their identities and hourly locations are posted.

6. Connect with community law enforcement personnel, first responders to a crisis.

7. Establish a reporting system for bullying and safety concerns.

8. School exterior grounds have been assessed for security concerns by law enforcement personnel or by individuals trained in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).

9. All areas of the building and grounds are supervised and there are no obvious "dead zones" where problems can occur, including parking lots, loading docks, and interior stairwells.

10. The interior of the school buildings is well-lit, clean and reflects pride in school identity and the accomplishments of its student body.

11. Assess for not only the safety of the school and school grounds, but also assess for the safety of the routes students take to school. (Ask students to draw a map of how they get to and from school and/or their perceived school bus safety) Interview school bus drivers and implement intervention strategies, as required.

12. There are effective access control policies and procedures for keeping intruders out of the school.

13. There are effective policies and procedures for keeping weapons out of the building.

14. A rigidly enforced key control policy is in effect and sensitive locks are replaced every three to four years.

15. There are effective policies and procedures for keeping gang-related "identifiers" and behaviors out of the building and off school grounds.

16. Check to see if staff members feel safe at all times during the school day. Work to improve the emotional climate of the school.

17. The school has a well-formulated Mission Statement that is posted and shared with all parties, and underlies improvement efforts. Work to change norms and expectations about aggression and violence.

18. The school has a collaboratively written Code of Conduct that has been examined for currency. It is educational more than punitive, and defines desirable, as well as undesirable behaviors and resultant consequences.

19. Administration and teachers have established an Inviting Learning Environment that encourages school bonding and ownership from all groups of students, staff and parents. Set up a School Website, telephone hotline, Home-school Link. Be sure to have teachers contact parents when students are doing well in school. Involve students in establishing and implementing rules and activities.

20. Academic standards are high, and pride in achievement is emphasized and publicly expressed through multiple outlets.

21. Cultural, ethnic and other minority groups are valued and diversity is respected and honored. Bolster strengths of students and their families.

22. Parents are welcomed into the building and provided with opportunities and information to be full partners in their child's education. Work with parents to improve parenting skills such as monitoring, supervising and academic support.

23. All teachers have received training in classroom behavior management, and 95% of disciplinary consequences are administered at the classroom level.

24. All students receive evidence-based classroom instruction in anger management, social problem-solving, and/or conflict resolution across multiple grade levels.

25. The school has a comprehensive school-wide anti-bullying program in place and systematically evaluates its effectiveness.

26. The school has implemented a student peer mediation training program.

27. The school has implemented a peer warning system that allows for confidential student communication to identified adults.

28. The school has a broadly represented Crisis Intervention Team that has been trained in crisis response and management.

29. Administration and school personnel have undertaken initiatives to foster community-based supports and partnerships. Increase the availability of youth development opportunities and civic activities.

Secondary Prevention

30. All teachers have received training on methods to tailor academic instruction to meet diverse student needs. Convey high, clear expectations, but be realistic and collaborative.

31. The school has undertaken a special initiative to improve students' reading achievement and monitor its effectiveness. (See the Melissa Institute Reading Initiative Program *www.readingteacher.net*).

32. Have a commitment to systematically collect data to evaluate intervention programs designed to reduce bullying, improve academic performance, improve parental involvement reduce absenteeism, suspensions, expulsions, and drop outs. Share this data with staff and provide Professional Development days for staff training on a needs basis.

33. Work to bolster student "connectedness" to school and encourage teachers to be supportive, look for the good in students and point it out to them and share it with others. Celebrate student contributions, not give up on students who made mistakes, and talk to them about their futures.

34. Check on the health of your students. (Make sure they have basic health needs met like vision and hearing problems, nutritional and safety issues like homelessness).

35. Since school alienation has been found to be a key factor in the development of juvenile delinquency, work to bolster student "connectedness" to school.

36. Supportive services staff are provided adequate time and relief from other duties to implement interventions for identified students at risk.

37. Existing interventions for at-risk students have undergone recent program evaluations to assess their effectiveness.

38. Administrators treat office referrals as teaching opportunities to augment disciplinary procedures.

39. Out-of-school suspension is exceedingly rare and used only for clear issues of student safety and when home supervision can be assured.

40. In-school suspension is used sparingly, only for the most serious offences, and it contains an academic support component.

41. School personnel have assessed the drop-out problem and implemented evidence-based dropout prevention programs.

42. The school has implemented a mentoring program for at-risk students.

43. Ongoing needs assessment and program planning are driven by authentic data from disciplinary referrals and academic progress monitoring, and interventions are linked to the data.

Tertiary Prevention

44. Students with chronic and persistent behavior problems are routinely provided with assessment-driven behavior intervention plans.

45. Students with chronic anger management and aggression problems are provided with evidence-based skills training by support services staff.

46. All school personnel have been taught and have practiced ways to defuse and redirect students who evidence aggressive and violent behaviors.

47. There are staff members professionally trained in student restraint and safe transport, and their identities are known by everyone.

48. Effective partnerships or wraparound arrangements with families, community mental health, law enforcement and social service agencies are maintained to support the highest risk students.

49. School personnel have been trained to identify and help students who live with neglect and violence.