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Reading, Writing, and Readiness: A Survey of School Emergency Plans in the 2nd Congressional District of Mississippi

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Committee on Homeland Security
Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**READING, WRITING, AND READINESS:
A SURVEY OF SCHOOL EMERGENCY PLANS
IN THE 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI**

PREPARED FOR REP. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of Congressman Bennie Thompson, this report analyzes the results of a survey of principals and school district officials on the state of school preparedness in the 2nd Congressional District of Mississippi. The intent of the survey is to gain the perspective of those individuals who deal with emergency planning and management on a daily basis, and to obtain views on the effectiveness of federal agency efforts to assist officials in preparedness planning. Specifically, the report finds:

- **Department of Homeland Security is not a resource for 2nd District schools in developing emergency plans.** Although the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides information on how to secure America's schools, none of the respondents of the survey listed the Department of Homeland Security as a resource in the development of their emergency plans. The Department of Education was also not a resource for any of the respondents.
- **Federal efforts in school preparedness are uncoordinated and create confusion among respondents.** Nine percent of 2nd District schools do not know who to turn to for help with emergency planning. Overall, thirteen percent of respondents do not know who to ask for help.
- **Schools implore the Department of Homeland Security to take a leadership role in school preparedness.** Many respondents are eager to obtain feedback from the Department on the effectiveness of their emergency plans, or obtain training from the Department. Unfortunately, the Department has thus far failed to take a leadership role in school preparedness.
- **Respondents are feeling the squeeze of federal budget cuts in emergency preparedness.** The Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program, a grant program within the Department of Education that finances school emergency preparedness programs within the states, saw its state grant funding cut by \$90 million in fiscal year 2006. For both fiscal years 2006 and 2007, the Administration's budget included no money for the program. Only eighteen percent of respondents in the 2nd District report that their emergency preparedness budget is "adequate."
- **Respondents are not satisfied with their current state of preparedness; many would appreciate more funding from the Department of Homeland Security.** Over seventy percent of respondents in the 2nd District report that their emergency plans are inadequately rehearsed. Unfortunately, budget considerations have

READING, WRITING, AND READINESS: SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS SURVEY

likely limited the possibility of conducting more extensive training programs. Many respondents would appreciate a funding commitment from the Department of Homeland Security.

I. BACKGROUND

In September 2001, dozens of schools and over 6,000 children were evacuated from the area surrounding the World Trade Center. In October 2002, snipers struck fear in the hearts of D.C. area residents when they shot a Maryland boy as he stood outside of school. The incident prompted several county school officials to institute a lockdown across the region. In September 2004, 186 children were killed and hundreds more wounded when terrorists attacked their school in Beslan, Russia. Each of these tragedies reminds us that our schools remain vulnerable to direct and indirect attacks.

Unfortunately, existing objective and anecdotal evidence suggests most American schools are not adequately prepared to respond to a serious crisis. In July 2002, the National School Safety and Security Services, an independent national school safety consulting firm, began conducting an annual survey of school-based police officers for the National Association of School Resource Officers. The answers to questions on terrorism and school safety issues produced some startling results: ninety-five percent of responding school police officers believed their schools were vulnerable to terrorist attacks and seventy-nine percent reported that their schools were inadequately prepared for such an attack. A majority of those surveyed stated that their school's crisis plans were inadequately developed and tested. The findings of that survey were reaffirmed in 2003 and 2004.¹

To protect our children, our nation must continue to improve disaster preparedness and emergency response efforts to ensure an organized response in the event of a disaster. A wide variety of resources are available for schools to utilize in developing emergency response plans, including guides and reports from the public and private sector that offer assistance in crisis planning, infrastructure protection, and other specific threat areas.² But, as one report noted in 2003, the federal government's efforts have not necessarily translated into better-prepared schools. "Clearly, there are many preparedness activities underway. However, there is no coordination between these activities."³ That point was illuminated recently when the Department of Homeland Security announced the creation of a preparedness program called "Ready Kids," an education campaign focused on preparing children for disasters. Unfortunately, a

¹ See 2002 National School Resource Officer Survey conducted by National School Safety and Security Services, available at http://www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/nasro_survey_2002.html; 2003 National School Resource Officer Survey, available at http://www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/nasro_survey_2003.html; 2004 National School Resource Officer Survey available at http://www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/nasro_survey_2004.html.

² The National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, a website funded through grants from the Department of Education, contains a useful collection of information addressing those aspects of school buildings and grounds that help ensure the physical security of school occupants during natural disasters, accidents, and criminal acts and other man-made threats. Available at <http://www.edfacilities.org/safeschools/>. For another list of information available online, see generally the Department of Education website at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/index.html>.

³ "Schools and Terrorism: A Supplement to the National Advisory Committee on Children and Terrorism," Aug. 12, 2003, p. 7, found at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/children/PDF/working/school.pdf>.

Department spokeswoman “did not know” how this new program would differ from an existing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) program “FEMA for Kids.”⁴

In August 2005, several Democratic Members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security requested that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) undertake an examination of the programs at the Departments of Homeland Security, Education, and Health and Human Services that are designed to increase the emergency preparedness of primary and secondary public school officials, teachers, and students. The results of this report will be released in mid-2006, and are expected to provide a broad review of the effectiveness of these programs.

II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

At the request of Rep. Thompson, the Committee on Homeland Security undertook a survey of public school principals and school district officials in the 2nd Congressional District of Mississippi to gain the perspective of those individuals who deal with emergency planning and management on a daily basis. In November 2005, a thirty-two question survey was distributed to those officials; results were collected and tabulated in December 2005.

Similar surveys were also distributed and collected for six other Committee Members who requested an analysis of their Districts. The 2nd District’s responders included two elementary school respondents; four middle school and junior high respondents; twelve high school respondents; and four respondents who represent an alternative combination of schools (most commonly Pre-K-6; 7-12).⁵ Both small and large schools responded, with sizes ranging from 215 students to 3,100 students; the average school size is 720 students.⁶ When describing their school’s setting, most (fifty-five percent) said urban; five percent represent suburban schools and school districts; forty-one percent represent suburban schools.⁷

While this survey is not intended to be a scientific study, the data allows for a reasonable extrapolation to form a broader picture of school preparedness.

⁴ “Ready Kids; Gov’t to Prepare Kids for Terror, Disasters,” AP, Jan. 20, 2006.

⁵ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. The Committee received 109 responses from elementary schools; forty-seven responses from middle school and junior high respondents; forty-six high schools; fifteen “alternative combinations” (most commonly K-12, pre-K, and 7-12); and forty-seven school districts.

⁶ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. The Committee received responses from schools and school districts representing over 430,000 students.

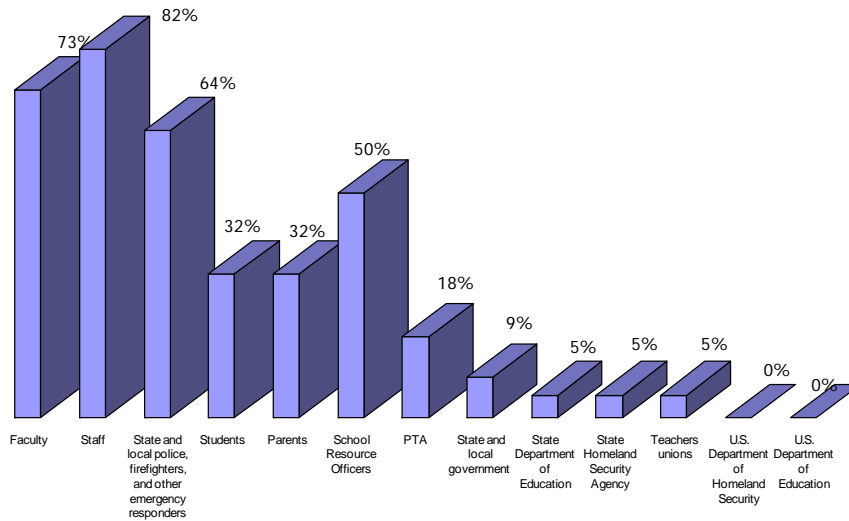
⁷ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, thirty-six percent of respondents described their school or school district’s setting as urban; thirty-seven percent of respondents said rural; twenty-five percent said suburban.

III. FINDINGS

A. The Department of Homeland Security is Not a Resource for 2nd District Schools Developing Emergency Plans

Neither the Department of Homeland Security nor the Department of Education assisted schools in developing their emergency plans in the 2nd District. Respondents were asked to choose among a list of officials on whom they rely to develop the schools' emergency plans. **None of the respondents reported relying on federal agencies.**⁸ (See Figure 1) The relationship between state and federal Departments of Education and Homeland Security is not readily apparent.

Figure 1:
Groups or Agencies that Assisted in Developing the Emergency Response Plan



B. In Their Words: Schools Implore the Department of Homeland Security to Take a Leadership Role in School Preparedness

Comments by survey respondents in the 2nd District indicate that they want a closer relationship with the Department of Homeland Security as opposed to the more

⁸ Respondents could provide more than one answer. Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, the response rate broke down as follows: eighty-six percent relied on staff; seventy-eight percent relied on faculty; sixty-five percent relied on state and local police, firefighters, and other emergency responders; fifty-six percent relied on School Resource Officers; fifty-two percent relied on parents; thirty-two percent relied on the PTA or other parent organizations; twenty-two percent relied on students; seventeen percent relied on state or local governmental authorities; ten percent relied on teacher unions; seven percent relied on their State Department of Education; one percent relied on their State Homeland Security Agency; one percent relied on the U.S. Department of Education; and one percent relied on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

detached approach that is in place. Many respondents are eager to obtain feedback from the Department on the effectiveness of their emergency plans and follow the Department's guidance in preparing their own plans. The following represents a sample of the responses to a question regarding the role that the Department of Homeland Security should take in providing or funding emergency plans.⁹

- “DHS should be more available and user friendly.”
- “Homeland Security should provide training, plans and funds to assist school districts in putting together effective ERP.”
- “More input should be developed in the DHS ... in regard to school districts.”
- “Assisting in preparing evacuation plans.”
- “Meeting the security needs of the district in making preparations for securing school campuses.”
- “I think DHS should provide ... assistance in preparing plans for the schools.”
- “Conduct training and information sessions on emergency preparedness.”
- “There should be a master plan with the basic standards that we are required to mesh with.”¹⁰

C. Bureaucracy Creates Confusion: 9% of 2nd District Schools Do Not Know Who to Turn to For Help with Emergency Planning

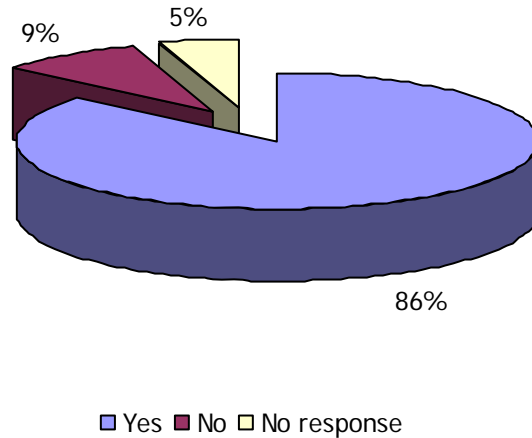
The Departments of Homeland Security, Education, and Health and Human Services created programs designed to increase the emergency preparedness of primary and secondary public school officials, teachers, and students. These resources have questionable value, however, if they are not accessible to school administrators. This appears to be slightly problematic for the 2nd District, as **nine percent of respondents**

⁹ See “Appendix C” for a complete list of comments.

¹⁰ There may be a greater need to publicize existing model plans rather than “reinvent the wheel” on the issue. Lists of best practices can be obtained from the federal government (including *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, US Department of Education, available at www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/index.html) and non-profit groups (e.g. the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, which contains a list of federal documents, magazines, and journal articles on school preparedness, available at <http://www.edfacilities.org/safeschools/>).

reported that they “do not know who to ask for help with emergency planning.”¹¹ It is apparent that federal agencies must improve outreach and communication efforts with these officials, and better publicize available materials.¹²

Figure 2:
Do You Know Where to Get Help In Developing the Emergency Plan?



D. Respondents Feel the Squeeze of Federal Budget Cuts in Emergency Preparedness

Respondents in the 2nd District are dissatisfied with the amount of money that is currently being spent on emergency preparedness in their schools. **Only eighteen percent of respondents report that their emergency preparedness budget is “adequate.”**¹³ When asked to estimate what percentage of their total budget was spent on emergency preparedness, twenty-seven percent of school officials report spending approximately one percent of their total school budget or less; forty-five percent spend approximately three percent.¹⁴

¹¹ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, only eighty-three percent of respondents told the Committee that they know who to ask for help with emergency planning. Thirteen percent of respondents do not know who to ask for help.

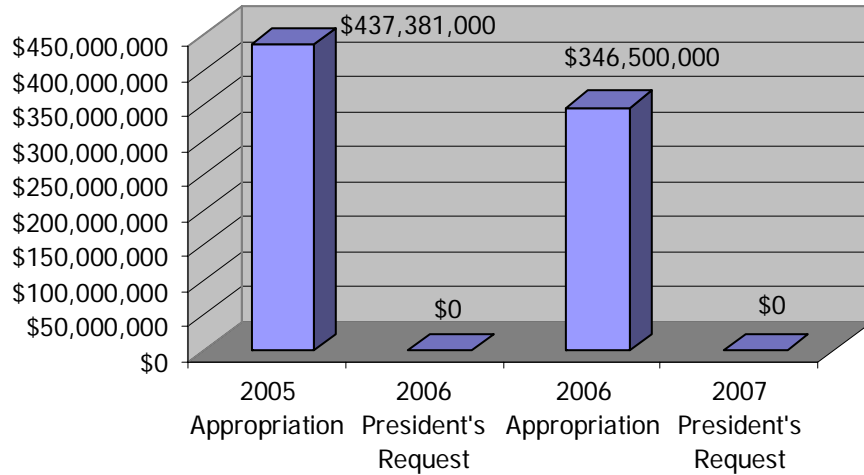
¹² Unfortunately, the survey’s limited questioning cannot determine whether those who responded affirmatively responded are consulting the proper resources or obtaining adequate assistance. The marketing of key reports will also help those individuals.

¹³ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, fifty-five percent of respondents reported that their emergency preparedness budget is “inadequate.” Only twenty-six percent said their spending was “adequate.”

¹⁴ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, forty-eight percent of respondents report spending less than one percent of their budgets on school preparedness; thirteen percent spend approximately one percent on school preparedness; eight percent spend approximately three percent on

One significant reason for this lack of funding is the decline of federal grant monies over the last several years. Many of the school preparedness grants – like the Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plans Discretionary Grants – are located within the Department of Education’s Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities program (SDFSC). Though SDFSC state grant programs received \$437 million in fiscal year 2005, the program only received \$346 million in funding in fiscal year 2006 – **over a \$90 million decrease.**¹⁵ **In fact, the SDFSC state grant program initially received no money under President Bush’s fiscal year 2006 budget proposal.**¹⁶ **For fiscal year 2007, the Administration again requested no money for the program.**

Figure 3:
Safe and Drug Free Schools State Grant Program Funding Cut: 2005-2007



The state of Mississippi experienced a slight drop in SDFSC funding since the September 11th attacks. According to the Department of Education budget, **the amount of money available for Mississippi under the SDFSC grant program has fallen from \$5.309 million in 2001 to \$5.290 million in 2005.**¹⁷ The decrease in federal funding has been felt in the 2nd District. When asked to describe the levels of federal funding after

school preparedness; one percent spend more than three percent of their budget on school preparedness; and twenty-seven percent either did not know or could not guess.

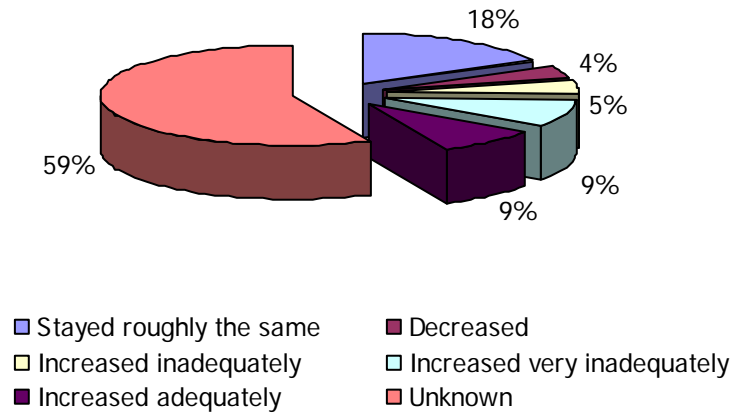
¹⁵ Department of Education Fiscal Year 2006 budget, available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget06/06action.pdf>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Department of Education Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities State Grants, 2001-2006, available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/06stbyprogram.pdf>.

the September 11th attacks, **nine percent of respondents say that the amount and availability of federal funding for school preparedness has “increased adequately.”**¹⁸

Figure 4:
Assessment of Federal Funding for School Preparedness Post-9/11



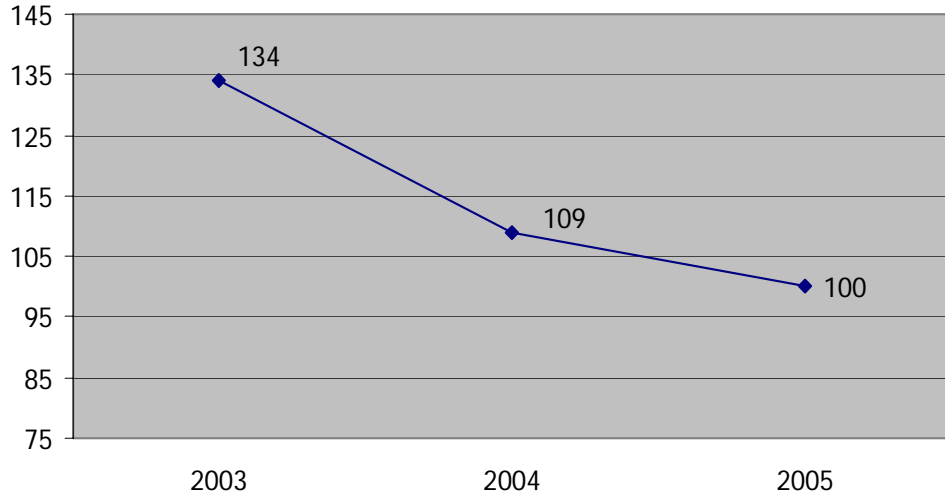
The number and value of grants available from the Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plans program has also declined over the years. **The number of awards is down from 134 awards in 2003 to 100 awards in 2005.**¹⁹ (See Figure 5) Given that there are around 17,000 school districts in the United States, this means that **one half of one percent of American school districts received funds last fiscal year funds each year to improve their emergency preparedness plans.** Budget cuts within the Safe and Drug Free Schools state grant program means that per capita school district spending is quite low. In 2005, the Department of Education authorized \$30.629 million in grants for this program – **the equivalent of providing every school district in America \$1,800 to meet their emergency needs.**²⁰

¹⁸ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, in the opinions of most respondents, the amount and availability of federal funding for school preparedness has stayed the same since September 11, 2001. According to respondents, eight percent believe the amount has increased adequately; forty percent believe the amount has stayed the same; fourteen percent believe the amount has either “increased inadequately” or “increased very inadequately”; two percent believe the amount has decreased.

¹⁹ Department of Education Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plans Discretionary Grants, 2003-2005, available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/dvpemergencyresponse/funding.html>.

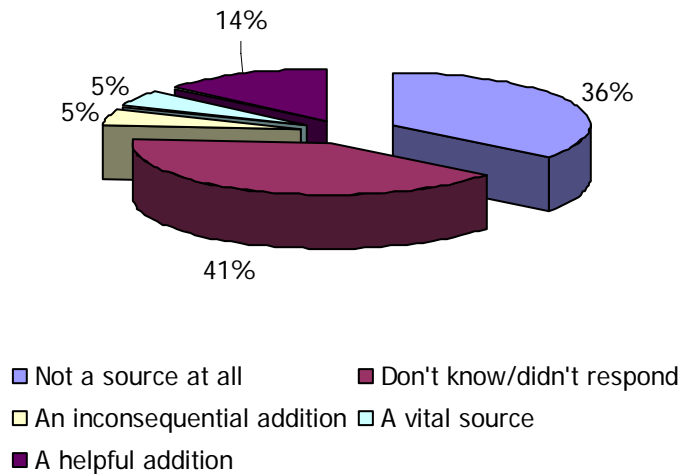
²⁰ Calculation based on sum of Department of Education Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plans Discretionary Grants in 2005, available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/dvpemergencyresponse/funding.html>.

Figure 5:
Emergency Response and Crisis Management Grants, 2003-2005



Respondents in the 2nd District voiced frustration over the Department of Education budget reductions. **Over forty percent of respondents report that the Department of Education has either “not been a source of funds” or has been an “inconsequential addition” to their emergency budgets since the September 11th attacks four years ago.**²¹

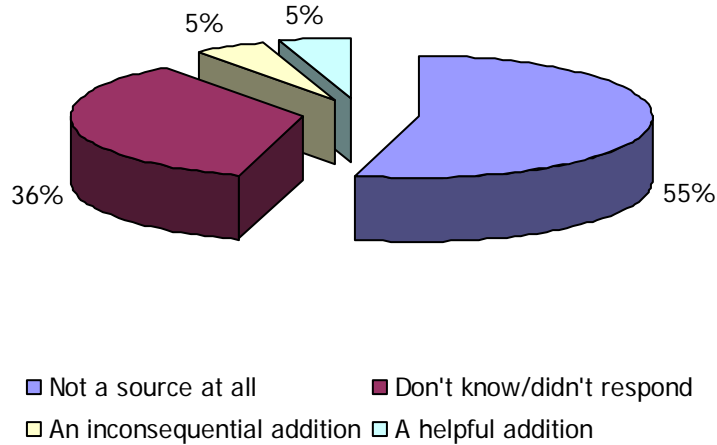
Figure 6: Department of Education Grants Post-9/11



²¹ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, fifty-two percent of respondents reported that federal Department of Education grants were “not a source” of funds for their emergency preparedness efforts; nine percent reported that these grants were “an inconsequential addition”; eight percent said they were a “helpful addition”; and only four percent said that they were a “vital source” of funds for their efforts.

Unlike the Department of Education, the Department of Homeland Security does not provide direct grants for states or schools to use in funding school preparedness training for school officials, teachers, and students. Instead, states may use State Homeland Security Grant Program funds to address school preparedness under certain conditions.²² However, **over half of respondents report that State Homeland Security grants have not been a source for their emergency preparedness efforts since the September 11th attacks. Only five percent believe these grants are a vital source or even a helpful addition.**²³

Figure 7:
How Have State Homeland Security Grants Assisted
Your Emergency Preparedness Efforts?



E. Respondents are Unsatisfied With their Current State of Preparedness; 82% Have Not Conducted Costly “Full-Field Drills”

In 2002, then-Secretary of the Department of Education Rod Paige wrote a letter to the nation’s Chief State Officers strongly urging schools “to have a plan for dealing with crisis, including crises such as school shootings, suicides, and major accidents, as well as large-scale disasters, such as the events of September 11, that have significant

²² Email correspondence with David Hess, Department of Homeland Security, Jul. 12, 2005. On file with the Democratic Staff, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security.

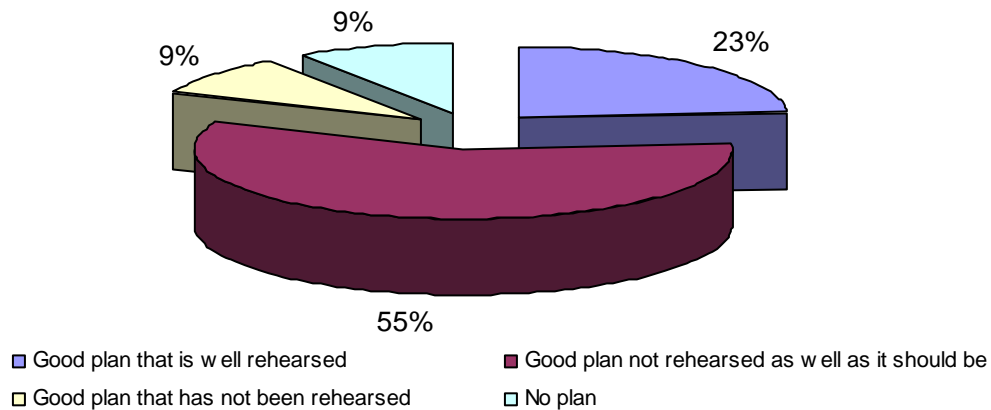
²³ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, fifty-nine percent of respondents reported that federal State Homeland Security grants were “not a source” of funds for their emergency preparedness efforts; six percent reported that these grants were “an inconsequential addition”; six percent said they were a “helpful addition”; and only two percent said that they were a “vital source” of funds for their efforts.

impact on schools throughout the country.”²⁴ Schools without such plans were encouraged to implement one immediately.

Unfortunately, simply “having a plan” is not enough to either mitigate a crisis or to ensure an effective response in the event of such a situation. Surveys like the annual School Resource Officer review indicate that despite the existence of crisis plans, most officials still believe that they are not prepared to respond to a disaster.

Echoing the results of earlier surveys, **over seventy percent of respondents in the 2nd District report that their emergency plans are inadequately rehearsed.**²⁵ When asked to describe the state of their school or school district’s preparedness to respond to a terrorist attack or other major emergency, twenty-three percent said that their plan was good and well rehearsed; fifty-five percent said that the plan was good but not rehearsed as well as it should be; nine percent said they have a good plan that has not been rehearsed; and nine percent said they did not even have a plan.²⁶

Figure 8: State of Emergency Plan Rehearsal



Federal agencies such as the Department of Education emphasize the yearly simulation of school evacuation plans. In the 2nd District, at least eighty-six percent of

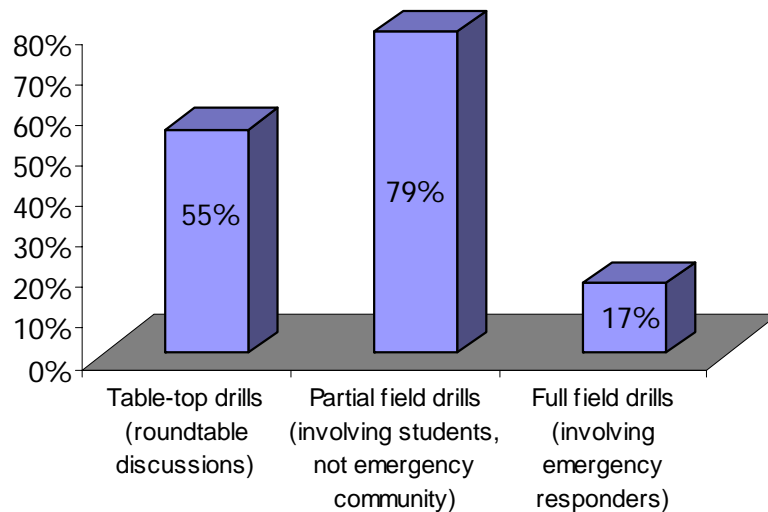
²⁴ Department of Education Policy Letter, Feb. 11, 2002, available at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/secletter/020211.html?exp=0>.

²⁵ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, fifty-five percent of respondents reported that their emergency plans are inadequately rehearsed, while thirty-seven percent said that their plans were “well rehearsed.”

²⁶ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, thirty-seven percent said that their plan was good and well rehearsed; forty-nine percent said that the plan was good but not rehearsed as well as it should be; eight percent said they have a good plan that has not been rehearsed; and four percent said they did not even have a plan.

respondent schools are conducting some form of emergency plan simulation.²⁷ But even though a high percentage of respondents are conducting simulations, **only seventeen percent of schools and school districts are conducting “full field drills” involving the participation of local emergency personnel and the first responder community.**²⁸ A 2003 conference on school readiness for catastrophic terrorism recommends that schools should strive to participate in “full field” exercises implemented by police, fire, local industries, and other outside agencies.²⁹ The key role that these officials will play in an emergency makes their participation in simulations extremely important. Unfortunately, the time, labor, and cost of these drills makes them difficult for many schools to conduct.

Figure 9: Methods of Simulation



²⁷ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, ninety-two percent of respondents report that they are conducting some form of emergency plan simulation.

²⁸ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, only fifteen percent of respondents report conducting “full field drills.” The numbers are better for the other methods of simulation. Twenty-five percent of respondents conduct “table-top drills,” while fifty-one percent of respondents conduct “partial field drills” (involving the evacuation of students but not including police and first responder involvement).

²⁹ Report of the conference *Schools: Prudent Preparation for a Catastrophic Terrorism Incident*, Oct. 30-31, 2003, George Washington University, available at http://www.schoolsecurity.org/school_terrorism_NSF.pdf

F. In Their Words: Schools Plead for More Emergency Preparedness Funding from the Department of Homeland Security to Improve Training Efforts

Comments by survey respondents indicate that federal funding would be a welcome addition to their preparedness training budgets. The following comments are a sample of the responses to a question regarding the role that the Department of Homeland Security should take in providing or funding emergency plans.³⁰

- “More financial aid.”
- “Homeland Security should provide training, plans and funds to assist school districts in putting together effective emergency response plan.”
- “Funding should be done completely by the Federal government.”
- “DHS should provide adequate funding. Schools are always short money.”
- “Grants should be provided for schools and school districts.”
- “Provide funding for committees to create and implement emergency preparedness plans for each school district.”
- “I think DHS should provide funds and assistance in preparing plans for the schools.”

IV. CONCLUSION

This report analyzes the responses of the 2nd Congressional District of Mississippi to the House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security “School Preparedness Survey.” Given the great demand for materials, training, and federal funding, one may conclude that the poor marketing of federal school preparedness materials and recent budget cuts have had a negative impact upon the school preparedness efforts in the 2nd District.

³⁰ See “Appendix C” for a complete list of comments.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
RESPONDENT SELF-ASSESSMENTS
STATISTICAL BREAKDOWNS AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS

A. Most Schools Have Emergency Plans; Many Follow Federally-Advised “All-Hazards” Approach

In 2002, then-Secretary of the Department of Education Rod Paige wrote a letter to the nation’s Chief State Officers strongly urging schools “to have a plan for dealing with crisis, including crises such as school shootings, suicides, and major accidents, as well as large-scale disasters, such as the events of September 11, that have significant impact on schools throughout the country.”³¹ Schools without such plans were encouraged to implement one immediately.

Today in the 2nd District, **eighty-six percent of respondents have answered that call, implementing plans to address a variety of incidents, from terrorist attacks to natural disasters to school shootings.**³² Experts from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of Homeland Security, and the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) recommend an “all-hazards” approach to emergency planning, which requires schools to examine threats that range from low to high consequence and build plans that integrate any threat that may possibly arise.³³ In the 2nd Congressional District, forty-three percent of the respondents have an “all hazards” approach – an emergency plan that does not contain specificity, and is designed to handle any type of emergency, ranging from a fire to a terrorist attack. Thirty-nine percent of respondents have an “emergency-specific” plan, with specific plans for particular incidents (most of which include fire, weather, school shooting, and bomb threats).³⁴

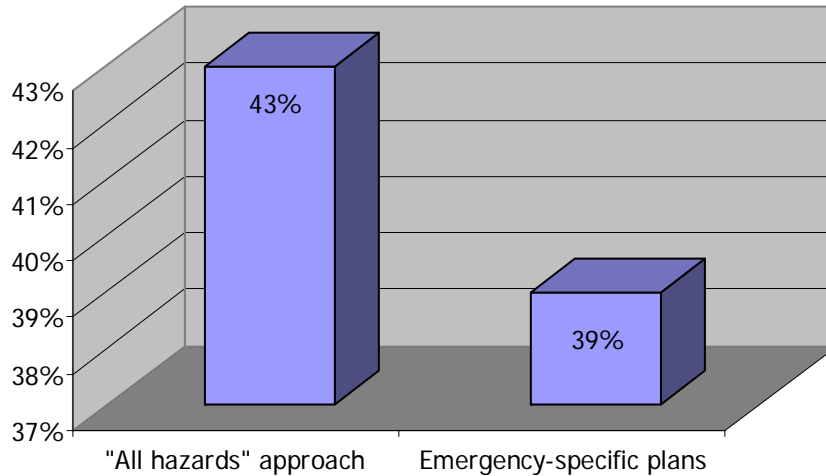
³¹ Department of Education Policy Letter, Feb. 11, 2002, available at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/secletter/020211.html?exp=0>.

³² Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, ninety-four percent of respondents reported that they have an emergency plan. Only four percent of respondents have no emergency plan at all.

³³ Report of the conference *Schools: Prudent Preparation for a Catastrophic Terrorism Incident*, Oct. 30-31, 2003, George Washington University, p. 7, available at http://www.schoolsecurity.org/school_terrorism_NSF.pdf

³⁴ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, sixty-two percent of respondents have an “all hazards” approach, while thirty-three percent have an “emergency-specific” plan.

Figure 10: Types of Emergency Plans



B. Respondents Report a Low Rate of Coordination with State and Local Emergency Responders

The coordination of a school’s emergency plan with local community officials and emergency responders is both important and necessary to mitigate the effects of a disaster. According to the Department of Education’s *Practical Information on Crisis Planning*:

Crisis plans should be developed in partnership with other community groups, including law enforcement, fire safety officials, emergency medical services, as well as health and mental health professionals. These groups know what to do in an emergency and can be helpful in the development of your plan. Get their help to develop a coordinated plan of response.³⁵

The Department of Education recommends working with emergency responders to learn, among other things, how they will respond to different types of crises, how they will direct their personnel, and who at the school will be their liaison during an incident.³⁶ For instance, after engaging in a joint review of the Beslan school attack, one of the primary recommendations of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security is for local law enforcement officials to maintain

³⁵ Department of Education, “Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities,” p. 1-9 (May 2003) available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf>.

³⁶ Department of Education, “Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities,” p. 6-19 (May 2003) available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf>.

contact and open lines of communication with school administrators to ensure a better response in a disaster situation.³⁷ Less than two-thirds of respondents report relying on state and local police, firefighters, and other emergency responders in developing their emergency plans, and **half of respondents stated they “did not know” if their school was included in the city or county’s emergency response plan.**³⁸ Because these entities will engage in extensive communication in the event of a disaster, schools and emergency responders should consider correcting any misunderstandings that presently exist between their groups.

C. Evaluation of Teacher and Student Participation in Emergency Plans

According to the Department of Education, all school personnel should review emergency plans and procedures, visit evacuation sites, and simulate crisis drills, tabletop exercises, and scenario-based drills on a regular basis.³⁹ In the 2nd District, teachers and administrators are fairly active participants in the plan development and simulation process. Eighty-six percent of respondents report that teachers and administrators “frequently” (more than once a year) or “occasionally” (once a year) engage in a review of the school’s evacuation plan.⁴⁰ (See Figure 11) **Unfortunately, only fifty-nine percent report that their employees receive ongoing professional development training on school security and emergency preparedness issues.**⁴¹

³⁷ Department of Education Policy Letter, Oct. 6, 2004, available at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/041006.html>.

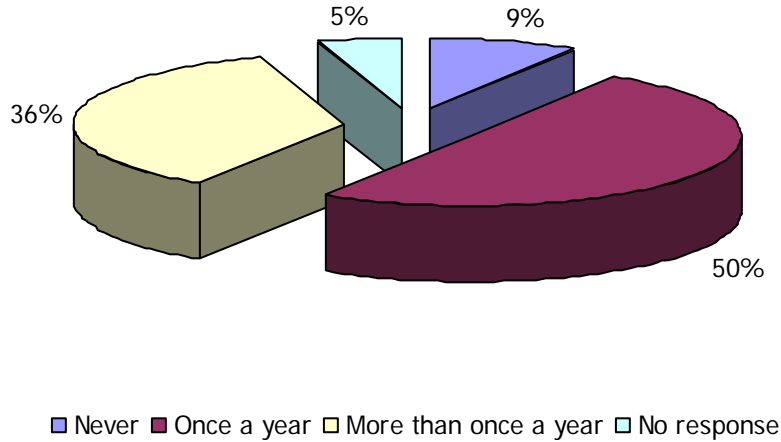
³⁸ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, sixty-five percent of respondents reported relying on state and local police, firefighters, and other emergency responders in developing their emergency plans, while thirty-eight percent of respondents stated either that their school was “not included” or “they did not know” if the school was included in the city or county’s emergency plan.

³⁹ Department of Education, “Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities,” p. 6-36 (May 2003) available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, seven percent “never” participate in a review of the school’s evacuation plan; fifty-two percent occasionally (more than once a year) engage in a review; and thirty-eight percent “frequently” engage in a review of the plan.

⁴¹ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, sixty-five percent of respondents report that their employees receive ongoing professional development training; thirty percent reported that there was no ongoing professional training.

Figure 11:
How Frequently Do Teachers/Administration Review the Evacuation Plan?



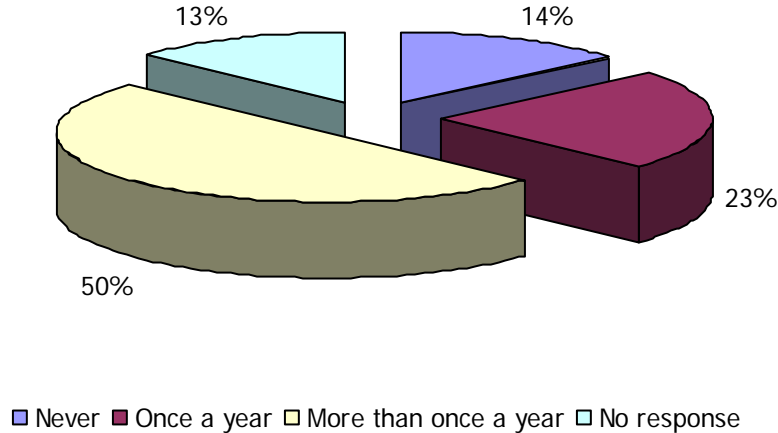
In addition to receiving training to handle their responsibilities at school, federal officials encourage to prepare emergency plans for their own families in the event of a crisis. The obligations of teachers to care for their students during times of emergency will likely delay a reunion with loved ones. It will be very challenging to keep staff members on site if their family members are in danger elsewhere in the county or in the state. **In order to facilitate such a situation, officials should encourage faculty and staff to prepare familial emergency plans. Only twenty-two percent of respondents reported doing so.**⁴²

Schools in the 2nd District have done well in engaging students in their emergency simulation process. Students who are familiar with the school’s response plan are more likely to respond more efficiently in the event of a crisis. One half of respondents in the 2nd District have “frequently” (more than once a year) practiced emergency plans with students, while twenty-three percent have “occasionally” (once a year) conducted simulations with students. Unfortunately, fourteen percent said students “never” participated in simulations.⁴³

⁴² Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, fifty-one percent of respondents reported that they did not encourage faculty and staff to prepare familial emergency plans. Forty-five percent of respondents did encourage the preparation of these plans.

⁴³ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, students are widely engaged in the practice of emergency plans. Sixty percent of respondents reported “frequently” (more than once a year) simulating their emergency plan with students; twenty-four percent reported “occasional” (once a year) simulation; twelve percent said that they “never” practiced the emergency plan with students.

Figure 12:
How Frequently Do You Practice Your Emergency Plan With Students?



D. Communication with Parents

An important consideration for preparedness involves keeping parents aware and informed of the school’s efforts to protect their children. The Department of Education notes that it is most useful to explain family members’ roles before an incident occurs and how parents should reach their children after a crisis. The Department recommends sending letters to families describing the school’s expectations for their response, and encourages schools to provide families with pamphlets reminding them of crisis procedures and information pertaining to them.⁴⁴

Respondents were asked to describe efforts to inform parents of the emergency preparedness plan and notify parents of the location of the school’s evacuation site in the event of such a situation. Most of the responding schools include this information in the school handbook, or notify parents through newsletters, open houses, crisis management plans, the PTA, and phone calls. Unfortunately, efforts to inform parents of the details of an evacuation plan are less effective: **half of 2nd District respondents report self-described ineffective notification efforts.**

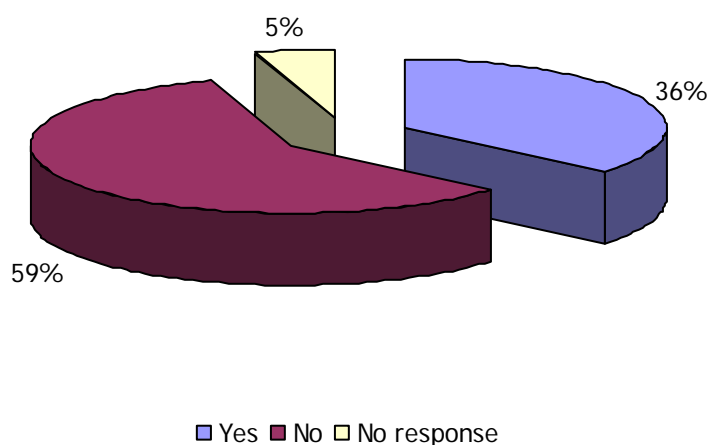
E. Evacuation Scenarios

School administrators and staff must be prepared to deal with a variety of unanticipated challenges in the event of a crisis. Four elementary schools and three high schools were located within six blocks of the World Trade Center, resulting in the forced evacuation of over 6,000 children on September 11th, 2001. Officials in the 2nd District

⁴⁴ Department of Education, “Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities,” pp. 6-40-42 (May 2003) available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf>.

may one day be required to evacuate students from school premises. According to survey results, seventy-seven percent of respondent schools have plans to transport students away from the school if necessary.⁴⁵ However, **only fifty-nine percent of schools are prepared to feed and shelter students for several days.**⁴⁶ Those who are capable of providing for students obtain supplies directly from their cities, counties, the state of Mississippi, the Red Cross, and the Salvation Army. The inability of the remaining respondents to care for students for such a short time period is cause for concern.

Figure 13:
Are You Prepared to Feed and Shelter Students For Several Days?



Communication with specific entities within the school system is an important aspect of disaster response. In the event of a disaster, **only fifty-nine percent of respondents are prepared to communicate with children, faculty, and staff who are housed in buildings that are physically separated from the school, such as a trailer classroom.**⁴⁷ Communication with non-English speaking students or the evacuation of disabled students has been considered by many respondents. Many survey respondents described their plans to deal with these students, with most schools pairing non-English speakers with ESL teachers or translators. Disabled students are usually escorted by an aide.

⁴⁵ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, seventy percent of respondents are prepared to transport students away from the school in the event of an evacuation; twenty-seven percent are not prepared to do so.

⁴⁶ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, fifty percent of respondents are not able to provide food and other supplies to students for two to three days if the school is turned into an emergency shelter. Forty-six percent of respondents are able to provide these supplies.

⁴⁷ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, seventy-three percent of respondent emergency plans provide for methods of communication with children, faculty, and staff in buildings that are physically separated from the school (such as a trailer classroom); fifteen percent of plans do not contain such a provision; the issue did not apply to seven percent of respondents.

H. Providing Mental Health Services

Finally, a successful recovery must include meeting the emotional needs of students, staff, families, and responders. On September 11, 2001, children not in the immediate vicinity of the World Trade Center or the Pentagon experienced a great deal of anxiety in watching the events on television, as many had parents in or around the attacked areas.⁴⁸ According to the Healthy Schools Network report *Schools of Ground Zero*, the greatest challenge facing the New York City School System after the September 11th attacks was providing mental health services.⁴⁹

The Department of Education recommends that every school crisis plan provide for emotional assessments of students and staff, to be conducted by a school counselor, social worker, school psychologist, or other mental health professional. In addition, schools should be able to locate services for families, who may want to seek treatment for their children or themselves.⁵⁰ According to survey results, **seventy-three percent of respondents have a plan to incorporate mental health counselors to students, faculty, and staff in the days after an emergency.**⁵¹ It would be productive for the remaining schools and school districts to establish a recovery program of this nature.

⁴⁸ Healthy Schools Network, “In Their Words: 9/11 Parents Help Other Parents and Schools With Lessons Learned,” available at <http://www.healthyschools.org/documents/INTHEIROWNWORDS.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Healthy Schools Network, *Schools of Ground Zero: Early Lessons Learned in Children’s Environmental Health*, available at http://www.healthyschools.org/guides_materials.html.

⁵⁰ Department of Education, “Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities,” p. 5-4 (May 2003) available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf>.

⁵¹ Compare these results with the overall results of the survey. Overall, seventy-six percent of respondents have a plan to incorporate mental health counselors; twenty percent do not have such a plan.

**APPENDIX B
SURVEY**

November 14, 2005

Thank you for completing this school preparedness survey. Your responses will help the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security better evaluate and respond to school security needs. Your answers will be kept confidential, and any comments that may contain identifying information will be edited. Please add as many additional pages necessary to clarify your responses or add your own comments. If you have any questions, please contact Jacob Olcott at the Committee on Homeland Security. You may reach him at (202) 226-2616. Otherwise, please fax this survey to his attention at (202) 226-4499 by Friday, December 9, 2005. Thank you for your assistance.

About Your School or School District

1. The grades at my school are:
 - a. Elementary (K-5/6)
 - b. Middle School (6-8)
 - c. Junior High (7-8)
 - d. High School (9-12)
 - e. Other (_____)
 - f. I am in charge of a school system

2. My school or school district contains _____ children.
(Please circle whether you are at a school or a school district)

3. My school or school system is in the following setting:
 - a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural

4. Please estimate how most of your students are transported to and from school
 - a. Bus %
 - b. Driven by parent %
 - c. Drive own car %
 - d. Walk/Bike %
 - e. Other %

5. Please estimate the distance that your students live from the school:
 - a. Less than a mile %
 - b. 1-2 miles %
 - c. 2-5 miles %
 - d. 5 miles or more %

- 6. Do you have emergency contact information for every student?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Developing the School/School District Emergency Response Plan

- 7. How would you describe the state of your school or school district’s preparedness to respond to a terrorist attack or other major emergency?
 - a. We have a good plan that has been well rehearsed
 - b. We have a good plan that has not been rehearsed as well as it should be
 - c. We have a good plan that has not been rehearsed at all
 - d. We don’t have a plan

Comments:

- 8. Many schools have uniform emergency plans that are designed to handle any type of emergency, ranging from a fire to a terrorist attack (so-called “all hazards” plans). Other schools have emergency-specific plans, specifically designed for individual emergencies like a shooting, a bombing, etc. Our school plan is:
 - a. An “all hazards” approach without specificity
 - b. An “all hazards” approach with plans for a particular event. (Please provide those events here:
_____)
 - c. An emergency-specific plan. (Please provide those events here:
_____)

Comments:

- 9. Have you asked for assistance in developing your emergency response plan from any of the below (circle any that apply)?
 - a. Faculty
 - b. Staff
 - c. Students
 - d. Parents
 - e. School Resource Officers
 - f. PTA or other parent organizations
 - g. Teacher unions
 - h. State/local police, firefighters, other emergency responders
 - i. State/local governmental authorities (please provide the name of the entities: _____)
 - j. State Homeland Security Agency
 - k. State Department of Education

READING, WRITING, AND READINESS: SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS SURVEY

- l. U.S. Department of Education
- m. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- n. U.S. Department of Homeland Security

10. If you asked for assistance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, did they provide any useful support?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not applicable

Comments:

11. If you asked for assistance from any other agency or entity, did they provide any useful support?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not applicable

Comments:

12. Do you know who to ask for help with emergency planning?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Details of the Emergency Plan

13. If evacuation from the school is necessary, are you prepared to transport students away from the school?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
14. If students must shelter on site, do you have the supplies to feed them for several (2-3) days?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

15. If you answered yes to #14, where would your school get these supplies (county, state, Red Cross)?

Comments:

16. Does your emergency plan provide for methods of communication with children, faculty, and staff in buildings that are physically separated from the school (such as a trailer classroom)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please describe the communication plan:

17. Does your emergency plan provide mental health counselors to students, faculty, and staff in the days after an emergency?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Emergency Simulation

Note: The following questions are designed to understand how you've simulated your emergency plan, not your compliance with county or state laws regarding fire drill exercises, hurricane drills, etc.

18. How have you simulated your emergency plan?

- a. Table-top drills (roundtable discussions of a prepared simulation)
- b. Partial field drills (involving the evacuation of students but not including police and first responder involvement)
- c. Full field drills (involving the evacuation of students, police and first responder involvement, etc.)
- d. Other

Comments:

19. How frequently do you practice your emergency plan with students?

- a. Never
- b. Occasionally (once a year)
- c. Frequently (more than once a year)

20. How frequently do teachers and administrators engage in joint review of the school/school district's evacuation plan?

- a. Never
- b. Occasionally (once a year)
- c. Frequently (more than once a year)

READING, WRITING, AND READINESS: SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS SURVEY

21. Do teachers, administrators and support staff receive ongoing professional development training on school security and emergency preparedness issues?:
- a. Yes
 - b. No
22. Has your school or school district ever conducted a risk assessment (measuring the risk of a terrorist attack or other emergency upon your school or school system)?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Comments:

23. Is your school or school district included in the city or county's emergency response plan?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know
24. Have you encouraged your faculty and staff to prepare emergency plans for their own families?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Budget

25. In general, how much would you estimate is spent on emergency preparedness as a percentage of your total school budget?
- a. Less than 1%
 - b. Approximately 1%
 - c. Approximately 3%
 - d. More than 3%
 - e. Don't know/can't guess
26. Is the amount you spend on emergency preparedness adequate?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

READING, WRITING, AND READINESS: SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS SURVEY

27. In your opinion, how has the amount and availability of federal funding for school preparedness changed since September 11, 2001?
- a. Increased adequately
 - b. Increased inadequately
 - c. Increased very inadequately
 - d. Stayed roughly the same
 - e. Decreased

Comments:

28. To what extent have federal Department of Education grants been a source of funds for your emergency preparedness efforts since September 11, 2001?
- a. A vital source
 - b. A helpful addition
 - c. An inconsequential addition
 - d. Not a source at all

Comments:

29. To what extent have state Homeland Security grants been a source of funds for your emergency preparedness efforts since September 11, 2001?
- a. A helpful addition
 - b. An inconsequential addition
 - c. Not a source at all

Comments:

In Your Own Words

30. What do you think the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's role should be in providing or funding emergency preparedness plans for schools or school districts?
31. Please describe your efforts to inform parents of the emergency preparedness plan.
32. Are parents familiar with the evacuation site in the event of an evacuation from the school?
33. Briefly describe your school's efforts to take care of non-English speaking students or disabled students during an emergency.

APPENDIX C
HANDWRITTEN RESPONSES

The following contains a list of responses to the question “What do you think the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s role should be in providing or funding emergency preparedness plans for schools or school districts?” As this was a confidential survey, responses which may reveal a school or school district’s identity have been redacted.

- Homeland Security should provide training, plans and funds to assist school districts in putting together effective emergency response plan.
- If funds are provided then a plan should be a part of receiving funds addressing terrorist attacks.
- Funding should be done completely by the Federal Government.
- More input should be developed in the DHS and the Mississippi Dept. of Education in regard to school districts.
- DHS should provide adequate funding. Schools are always short money.
- Grants should be provided for schools and school districts.
- Provide funding for committees to create and implement emergency preparedness plans for each school district.
- Schools in large urban centers need to be well prepared. Rural schools such as ours would only waste aid.
- They should equip all schools with an instant communication device to be used to communicate to a Central location in the event of a terror attack.
- Meeting the security needs of the district in making preparations for securing school campuses.
- I think DHS should provide funds and assistance in preparing plans for the schools.
- More financial aid.
- Major emergencies should be provided for by DHS.
- DHS should be more available and user friendly.
- Assisting in preparing evacuation plans.
- No specific responsibilities below state level.