A simple planning matrix – *Brian Armes*

I hold a deep appreciation for Occam's razor. While his exact quote is a bit cumbersome, Occam's razor can be summarized as a problem solving technique in which you eliminate unnecessary variables, and reduce multiples. In short, I appreciate an aesthetic of minimalism, and especially when planning for the multi-hazard environment of school emergency response. I believe that response planning should eliminate as many variables as possible, especially as it pertains to the expectation of staff training and response. Therefore, in the spirit of simplicity, I propose that a quick and efficient way to plan for any emergency can be found in a three-part matrix: detection -> communication -> response (DCR).

When planned within one of the three parts of detection, communication, response, virtually any situation becomes a matter of task analysis, training and capacity building. A helpful place to start is to take a common situation in which your school is already doing (DCR) and extrapolate the experience. An example may be how your staff currently responds to a student prone to seizures. When the IEP was written for this student, your team decided who might be involved in the student's day, what level of training those staff needed to recognize the onset of seizures (D), who they would need to communicate their observations to (C), and who would respond and administer an appropriate level of medical care (R).

In similar fashion, take a situation that may involve an unknown person lingering on/near your campus. The first step is deciding who is to be responsible for detecting intruders, and how they are to identify them. As a former principal, I always asserted that any person lingering somewhere they should not be, when they should not be there, was a potential problem. Once your staff have detected that intruder, how do they communicate the information? I established a practice in which staff used handheld radios to communicate campus-wide concerns. Campus-wide communication ensured that several people were aware, and on alert. Finally, develop your planned response. In most cases, either an administrator, SRO, or some other person not directly tied to a classroom will be part of a campus level response.

Anything from investigating a smell of smoke, the search for a missing child, or even detecting the isolated, disenfranchised student, can be deconstructed into the (DCR) tasks. The use of (DCR) helps define who needs training, and to what degree. What are the elements of detection? How can we establish timely, effective, communication? Ultimately, who will be included in the response, and what level of training will they will need? As you have probably already thought, early detection coupled with effective, timely communication allows for a better response. For me, I was always looking for detection that bordered the predictive, followed by instantaneous communication. My experience suggests that effective responses typically produce better outcomes, a goal I believe we all share.

Secondary Locking Devices – *Kayla Green*

As my husband was scrolling through Facebook, he showed me a video of a device that slide underneath doors to ensure that an intruder could not open the door. As with most people, the threat of a violent intruder in schools has raised his awareness, and interest, in gadgets and hardware. As a result, my husband thought this secondary locking device looked interesting, and he wanted my opinion. He was surprised when I answered, no, I did not think it was a good idea. Nor do I even think it is necessary. Sure, adding hardware to an already locked door may provide some level of additional emotional value, but there is no substantiated practical value. In studying past events, there has been only one recorded incident where an active shooter breached a locked door. In that incident, the shooter was a student upset with a specific teacher and had come to murder that particular person. Unfortunately, adding hardware to an already locked door may create a different type of emergency. What if, doing the course of a lockdown, students behind "doubly secured" door require assistance from another type of First Responder? What breaching tools might be needed to extract students from a fire, or attend a medical emergency apparatus is in place. In fact, the Idaho State Fire Marshall has sent out a reminder that these devices are only legal if they follow fire code. As an alternative, keeping your door locked at all times, with a magnetic or fabric strip keeping the strike from engaging proves effective and convenient. The IOS3 has many of these magnetic strips if your classroom door needs one. If you have any questions on whether your devices follow code, please follow up with your local fire authority.

The Basics for K12 School Security: Recommendations from the Idaho Office of School Safety and Security –
Guy Bliesner and Mike Munger

The school shooting in Parkland, Florida, like previous highly publicized acts of school violence, has precipitated concentrated scrutiny and a deluge of suggestions. Ineffective, unsustainable or simply impossible remedies fill comment inboxes; the resultant pressure is intense. An army of security vendors selling their newest product can overwhelm the search for effective solutions. For complex, multi-faceted problems like school security, the answer "All you need to do..." rarely is.

This plays out against a background of limited resources and expertise. For most educators, all their training, background and experience revolve around student achievement. Given that, determining meaningful improvements in your security profile often becomes a confusing calculus.

What are the essential elements for effective school security? Start with the fundamentals. The following recommendations from the Idaho Office of School Safety and Security (IOSSS) outlines foundational elements and the research findings supporting their foundational priority.

1. **Securable Space**
    As asserted in *The Sandy Hook Advisory Commission Report*, properly secured classroom doors have repeatedly proven an effective response in school shootings. Classroom doors should be lockable (without a key) from the inside the classroom. Metal framed, solid core, fire-rated doors are preferred. Building perimeter doors should be secured with visitor access through a single monitored entrance. Campus perimeters should be fenced, secured and supervised while students are present. Access to remote instructional spaces should be within secured routes.

2. **Building and Campus Communications**
    Effective communication is a requirement for school operations. All schools should have a public address system audible in all interior and exterior occupied areas. The ability to initiate campus-wide notification from multiple locations throughout the building is preferred. Schools need an intercom system with two-way capability in all instructional spaces. A one-to-many radio system for all key personnel is critical for response. The limitations of cellular technology make them ineffective in dynamic situations.

3. **Common Classroom Response Protocol**
    Simple, predictable and trainable classroom actions are the core of an effective school response plan. Complex responses at the classroom level are difficult to train and sustain with staff turnover, student mobility and the rotating substitute teachers. The IOSSS recommends a platform called the Four Command Responses; Evacuation, Reverse Evacuation, Hall Check and Lock Down.

4. **Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management:**
    The Secret Service's *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model* report notes that effective behavioral threat assessment and management processes are a key factor in interdicting potential school shooters. Research confirms the overwhelming majority of school shooters are students. School personnel are uniquely positioned to observe and report pre-attack behaviors once given appropriate training. The current standard of care includes research-based investigation, analysis and management by a well-trained, multidisciplinary team.

Creating securable space and assuring effective communications will likely require infrastructure improvements or modification. These vulnerabilities lend themselves well to one-time use monies. Classroom response and behavioral threat management are primarily operational modifications and should be addressed, as such.

A more robust security platform will naturally evolve from these four elemental principles. Additionally, once in place, they tend to drive attention to other vulnerability. School security improvement is an ongoing process. A strong foundation is not a guarantee of a secure facility, but neglecting the fundamentals can be a catastrophic misstep.