

TIPS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: PROVIDING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CONFLICT

As a school administrator, your leadership is very important to your school staff, students, and families. Effective leadership can be challenging when your school community is facing or recovering from conflict or adverse events. When children and adults, including school staff, see and hear about conflict, they can have many feelings such as anger, sadness, and fear. Maintaining strong leadership, with the following special considerations in mind, can help your school community cope with upsetting events in a positive way.

SOME IDEAS TO SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL:

- [Be a Source of Inspiration and Motivation](#): When you address your school staff, particularly during or following a crisis or conflict, remind them of their critical role in the lives of their students and families.
- [Model and Promote Self-Care](#): Pay attention to your own emotional well-being and that of your staff.
- [Provide Specific, Relevant Resources](#): Provide practical, hands on, easy-to-read information to parents/caregivers and school staff related to positive coping strategies, problem solving, and promoting safety and wellness at school, home, and in the community.
- [Reinforce Your School-wide Safety Plan](#): Remind school staff about the details of your safety plan, including building safety, emergency response plans, and crisis management strategies. Be prepared to modify the standard plan as needed.
- [Limit and/or Prohibit the Media's Presence](#): You may receive requests from the media about covering events occurring on school grounds or within the community. Prioritize children's education, safety, and privacy by limiting and/or prohibiting the presence of media personnel on school grounds.
- [Integrate Visiting Professionals and Support Staff](#): If additional personnel are deployed to your school building (police officers, administrative support, and/or mental health professionals) have a plan for integrating these staff even if they are only there for a limited time. Be clear about roles and responsibilities of all team members and identify a lead coordinator for response efforts within your school building. Introduce visiting professionals to full time staff; it's important for students and families that all adults in the school are familiar with one another and present a united front. Keep in mind that during a school crisis, your school support staff are part of the community and may be having their own challenges dealing with the crisis and may benefit from the external support.
- [Limit Changes to School Routines](#): Keep to your regular school routine and bell schedule as much as possible. Routines can be comforting and provide a sense of normalcy for students and school staff.



- [Hold Group Discussions](#): If you, your teachers, or other staff hold school-wide, grade level, classroom, or small group discussions with students about recent events, it is recommended to:
 - Emphasize the importance of student safety, including making positive choices, what is being done to keep them safe, and how they can help keep themselves safe.
 - Respond to student emotions by listening, praising, and letting them know all feelings are okay.
 - Respond to questions in an age-appropriate manner. It's fine to say you don't know the answer.
 - Discuss the positive events going on in the school, neighborhood, and city. Point out when you see or hear students and others showing their thoughts and feelings in a healthy, caring way.
 - All adults in the school should remain a positive, politically neutral, supportive entity.
- [Know what is normal or not normal for your students](#) and ask for help from a school counselor if you are worried about significant changes in a student's mood, behavior, or grades.
<http://www.naeyc.org/content/coping-violence>