

## SAFE SCHOOL CAMPUS INITIATIVE: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Joe M. Nguyen <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> City of San Jose Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, San Jose, CA

### **Abstract**

The presentation is to inform school administrators, representative from city agencies and other educational entities of an existing school safety protocol that operates with the collaborative effort of law enforcement, schools, local municipality and community-based organizations. The protocol assists schools administrators to deal with youth and gang violence on school campuses and in surrounding neighborhoods. A PowerPoint of the Safe School Campus Initiative protocol and lecture will illustrate the Safe School Campus Initiative program, the roles and responsibilities of Safe School Campus Initiative members and the importance of information sharing. It will also provide ideas on developing, establishing, and maintaining a safety protocol for schools. The audience will take with them a copy of the Safe School Campus Initiative program as a reference of the presentation.

### **Introduction**

Safe School Campus Initiative is a comprehensive safety protocol designed to assist school administrators, principals and or vice principals to manage youth and gang-related incidents in and around their campus. A quick point of contact with a rapid deployment of staff team to provide prevention services, intervention services or referral to other services, school administrators can focus on educational needs for students and operation support for school staff. The purpose of Safe School Campus Initiative is to create and maintain an environment that is safe for students and staff.

### **History of the Safe School Campus Initiative**

In the early 1990s, gang-related incidents increased on the streets of San Jose. The majority of the gang related incidents involve youth of high school age. These incidents occurred on the streets but slowly trickled onto the high school campus and visa versa. School administrator now had to focus on school safety. To address this issue, Mike Gibeau, the Director of Safety for Eastside Union High School District, developed a school-based safety protocol called Safe School campus Initiative.

The protocol has a unique multi-system collaborative component. It required the participation from the Eastside Union High School District school administration, San Jose Police Department, the City of San Jose Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Service, Santa Clara Probation Department and District Attorney's Office, and local community based organizations. This multi-system formed the safety partnership called the Safety Multi-Disciplinary Team.

By early 1994, SSCI was implemented into the high schools of Eastside Union High School District with the assistance from Albert Balagso, Deputy Director of Park, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, San Jose Police Chief Lou Covarrubias and City of San Jose Mayor Susan Hammer. Each provided the resources for operation of Safe School Campus Initiative. The program objective was to prevent and, if necessary, help manage critical incidents of youth and gang related activities on and around the school campus. With such a

success, the program was adopted by all public high schools within the City of San Jose three years later. By September of 2001, the protocol funneled itself to the middle schools and, by 2002, it became a city wide initiative. Safe School Campus Initiative protocol has been integrated into school site safety plan by all public schools in the City of San Jose.

## **Methodology**

Safe School Campus Initiative purpose is to assist schools in creating and maintaining a safe environment for students and staff. Its primary is to prevent and if necessary, help manage critical incidents of youth violence, in the schools. This is accomplished by deploying intervention teams through early response to potentially violent situations, intervening in potentially violent events and providing after care follow-up services to prevent further escalation of violence.

A formalized safety partnership is established through the development of the Safety Multi-Disciplinary Team. This allows for effective communication between multi-systems and permits the use of a common protocol for the development of unified school safety policies and critical response procedures. When systems are synchronized, they can provide additional resources to increase the capacity of the school safety team to resolve high-risk situations involving youth or gang related crime. Collaboration between members is one important factor for the program to function.

The City of San Jose, through its commitment to school safety, designates safety coordinator personnel to support safety in schools. The specialized roles include the Police School Coordinator from the Community Services Division and the Community Coordinator from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Community Division. Other personnel are the Probation Officer from the Santa Clara Probation Department, Gang Unit, and the Deputy District Attorney from Santa Clara County. All members and the school administrator constitute a Safety Multi-Disciplinary Team with each member contributing a special skill set to the program.

All members of the Safety Multi-Disciplinary Team must be able to communicate effectively. California Welfare and Institution Code 830.1 allow the disclosure and exchange of information by members of the Safety Multi-Disciplinary Team. Under the authority of 830.1, members of the Safety Multi-Disciplinary Team engages in the prevention, identification, control of juvenile crime or criminal street gang activity. The team also fits under the Juvenile Justice Multi-Disciplinary Team Model. This allows school administrators and team members to legally exchange information pertaining to juveniles with the purpose of school safety, but in a way that ensures confidentiality of the juvenile. Furthermore, participating agencies sign a Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement with the school district stating the description of the role each agency will perform in support of the Initiative and the Safety Multi-Disciplinary Team. The stipulation of this information exchange, require all information be kept among Multi-Disciplinary Team members.

The Safe School Campus Initiative is the establishment of an effective communication system. Schools are assigned a police school coordinator and a community coordinator who are the point of contact for Safe School Safe Campus Initiative. Hence, school administrators are the designated point of contact for their school. Members exchange information at regular site visits, monthly safety meetings, incidental meetings and safety alerts concerning school safety. In addition to regular exchanges of information, school administrators are able to utilize a voice paging system to request assistance for potential or incidents in progress, or leave information pertinent to an incident at any time. An assigned police school coordinator and a community coordinator monitor this system at all times and respond to the page accordingly.

School administrators are trained to activate the emergency response protocol based on three levels of response. The activation can be in the form of a telephone call to their point-of-contact or a voice message left on the Multi-Disciplinary Team paging system. Police school coordinators and community coordinators are trained to respond accordingly to the three levels of response. The levels of response are determined by the seriousness and risk assessment of the situation.

### Level I “Incident in Progress”

*9-1-1 event, which is clearly a safety concern and is interfering with school operations*

Police are 1<sup>st</sup> responders and assume incident command

- Incident is in progress or will happen within a short time
- Violence has erupted
- Major Campus Disruption
- Weapon have been observed
- Violent or Armed Intruder
- Gang Fight or Gang Violence
- Confirmed Bomb Threat
- Hostage(s) taken

### Level II “Incident Likely to Occur”

*Increasing potential for an incident to both happen and cause interference with school operations*

- Tension has become elevated; conflict seems certain to occur
- Significant threat have been made toward students or staff
- Fights and incidents in the past few days are connected
- Previous events involved known street gangs or gang members
- Reliable source says, “fight will happen Friday” or “at lunch”
- Identified groups have been seen cruising the school/gang members recruiting on campus
- Information may indicate potential for an incident that may warrant proactive intervention or mediation

### Level III “Potential that Incident May Occur”

*Clearly is not an immediate safety concern or interference with school operations*

- Report of tension or potential conflict among individuals, groups or school have surfaced in the community
- New school or community trends of youth violence have arisen or old trends have resurfaced
- Incidents have happened on campus, at other schools, or in the community that may point to future incidents
- Cannot pinpoint when or if an incident may occur, but attention should be given to the situation
- Information may indicate potential for an incident that may warrant proactive intervention or mediation.

Intervention team responding to safety activations provides service suited to the nature of the incident. The deployed team can offer preventative, intervention or after-care service to the school. Services vary from gang awareness presentation for staff or parent, choice and consequences presentation to students, conflict

mediation services, and campus monitoring assistance, referral service for gang intervention, youth related programs or services. Time is factored into the responses because the team is required to respond to safety activations within a thirty minutes window and resolve the cause for the activation within in two weeks.

## Findings

Safe School Campus Initiative has been in operation city wide for over nine years with great success. With schools utilizing the program to assist with their youth and gang related incidents on campus, the intensity of violence has decreased due to early intervention. A comparison of statistics collected over a three year period reflected the number of safety activations or “calls for services” by the schools.

Figure 1 (next page) reflected the calls for service between 00’-01’ to 01’-02’ school year, the calls for service increased by approximately 32 percent. In 02’-03’ school year, the calls increased another 13 percent. Figure 2 (next page) reflects the levels of incidents between 00’-01’ and 02’-‘03’ school years. The intensity of Level I decrease with the increase in Level III. The correlation of information collected showed the cause and affect, an increase calls for service to Level III prevented many Level I incidents from occurring.

Safe School Campus Initiative collects customer service survey in an effort to evaluate the program’s effective with schools. School campus Initiative collects customer surveys on a bi-yearly process from school administrators and staff who have worked or interacted with the program.

Figures 3 and 4 (second page following) show the numbers of customer service surveys collected for 03-04 school year. Collected data exceeded target value for Non-Proliferation of Violence, Respond within 30 minutes, Resolution in Two Weeks and Customer Rating of Very Good or Better.

## Discussion

Safe School Campus Initiative benefits schools and school districts. The program provides resources for schools to prevents, identified and control juvenile crime, and criminal street gang. It establishes a proactive approach for school safety planning for the prevention or management of incidents related to youth service. It also creates clear lines of authority, multi-system protocol and procedures for the management of critical incidents of violence or crime occurring on campus. Safe School Campus Initiative strengthens the discipline team of the schools when the capacity of the school team is insufficient to handle large-scale or complex incidents of youth violence.

Administrators are not the only ones who benefit from the program. Students also benefit from the program. Students involved in school-related incidents would receive some type of assistance. The assistance would depend on the outcome of a needs assessment. The outcome can lead to a referral for a gang intervention program, work experience program, substance abuse program, family services or programs meeting the needs of the assessment.

The intervention teams are fortunate to have resources readily available to them. Members the intervention teams also belong to the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force. The Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force is comprised of local service providers who offer youth programs and services among an array of other services. Intervention team can quickly connect youths and their family to the appropriate service, hence completing the task within the two week targeted time frame.

Figure 1. Calls for service, 2000 - 2003

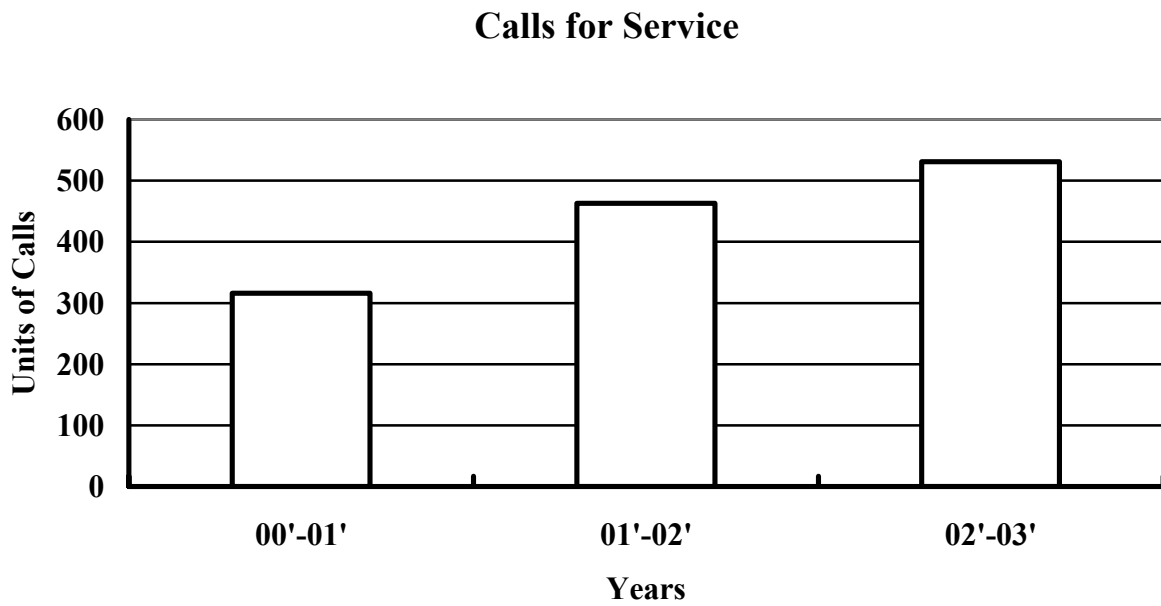


Figure 2. Level of response, 2000 - 2003

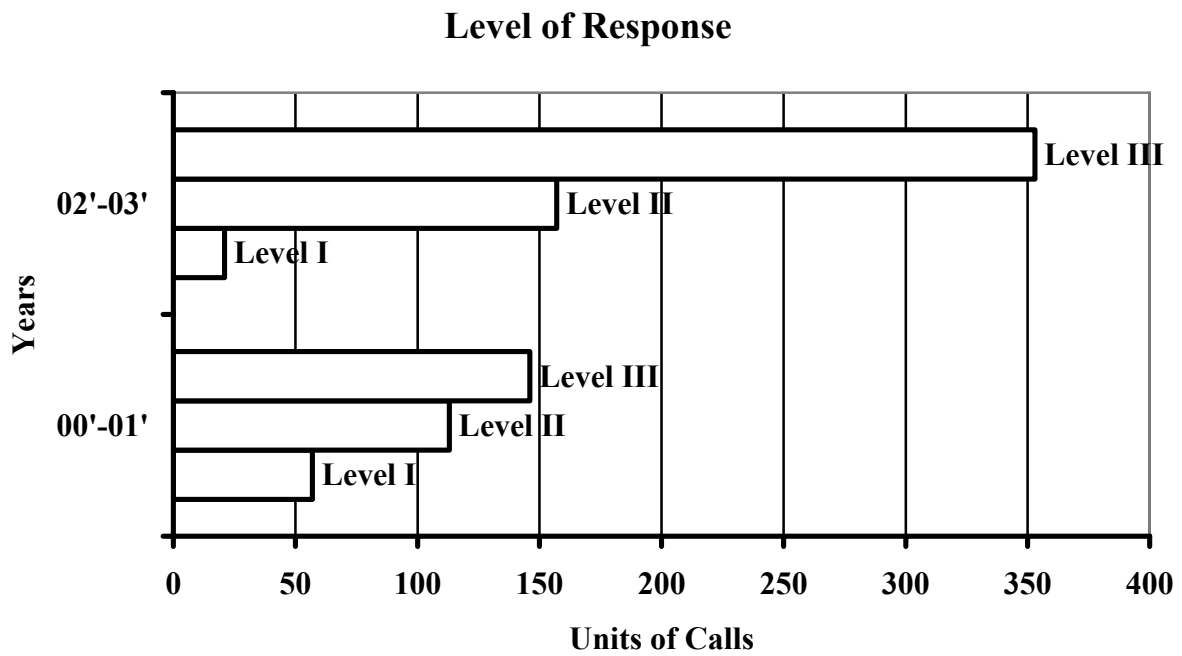


Figure 3. Customer satisfaction survey

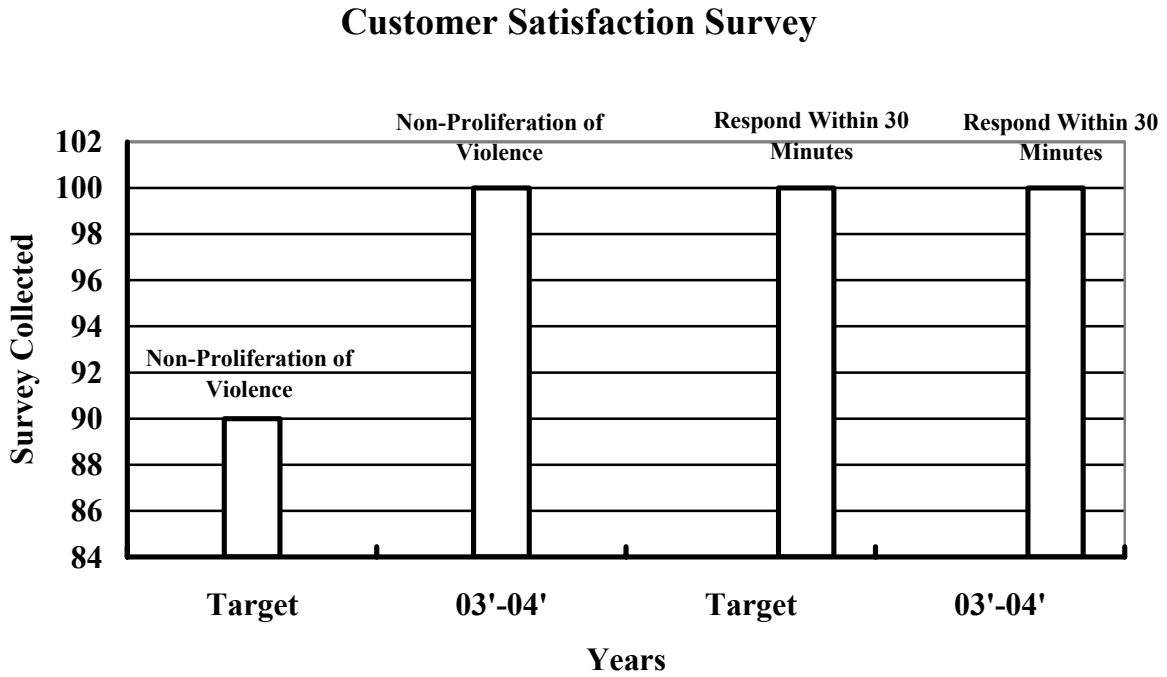
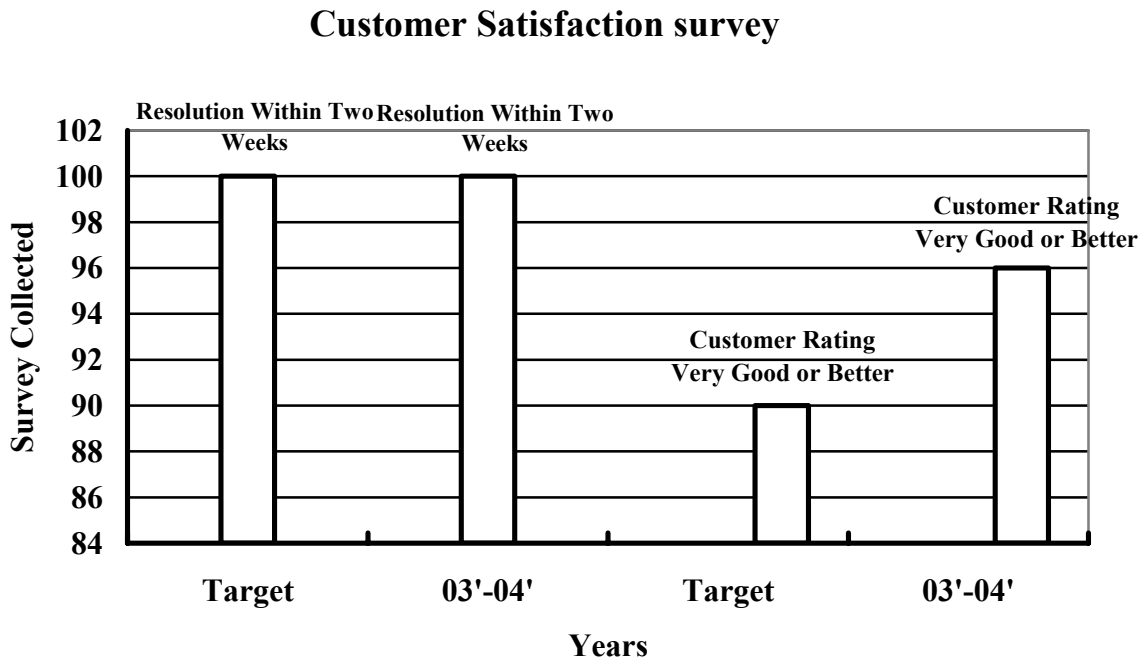


Figure 4. Customer satisfaction survey



## **Conclusion**

Safe School Campus Initiative has developed into a city-wide effort to assist schools in the prevention, the identification and the control of juvenile crime and criminal street gang activities. With such great success Safe School Campus Initiative is endorsed by the current police chief and mayor of San Jose, the Parent Safety Committee of Eastside Union High School District and support by all school districts within the City of San Jose.