

An Analysis of School Crisis Preparedness in Kansas

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Abstract

Families trust schools to keep their children safe during the day. While the majority of schools do remain safe thanks to the efforts of millions of educators across America, the unfortunate reality is that school districts throughout the country may be touched either directly or indirectly by a major crisis of some kind at any time.

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the status of crisis management in schools as perceived by K-8 school administrators in the state of Kansas. Additionally, the purpose of this study was to analyze the readiness level of administrators and schools to respond to major crisis situations and identify to what extent collaboration is occurring between first responders and school administrators. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to explore training opportunities that have been made available to administrators, and analyze to what extent administrators face barriers in the implementation of crisis preparedness plans.

A quantitative research design with descriptive analysis using survey methods was utilized for this study. Additionally, a factorial analysis of variance was conducted to address to what extent administrators differ in school-wide crisis preparedness according to demographic variables. The Crisis Preparedness Survey was administered through a web-based questionnaire to gauge the perceptions of K-8 administrators on their level of preparedness for a school crisis situation.

Findings from the study indicated that the majority (70.7%) of K-8 administrators in Kansas perceive they are prepared for a crisis and have benefited from the crisis preparedness training they have received, but there is a lack of consistency among administrators as to the type of training that has been received or should be offered. K-8

administrators in Kansas are committed to crisis preparedness in schools, but 94% perceive they face significant barriers in the implementation of their plans, such as time, money, practice, staff reluctance, and building design.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the students I have had the privilege to serve, as well as the colleagues with whom I have had the honor to work with both past and present. In addition, this work is dedicated to all of my family and friends who provided me with endless love and support so I could achieve my goal, and have encouraged me throughout this incredible journey.

It is with great pride that I dedicate this work to my nieces and nephews: Megan, Sam, Ella, and Baby Stokes. May they allow their faith to guide them, may they always be curious about the world around them, and may they always have the courage to follow their dreams and stand up for what is right. They bring great joy to my life, and I am proud to be their Aunt Stephers. Peace, love, and blessings to each of you now and always.

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Chapter One

Introduction

An estimated 55 million children in the United States attend public or private schools each day (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Each school day the nation's schools are trusted with providing a safe and healthy learning environment for students and teachers. On any given day, more people are assembled at school settings than any other location in the community. Therefore, the prospect of violence in schools is unthinkable. Graham, Shirm, Liggin, Aitken, and Dick (2006) suggest that while the possibility of a crisis event at a school has long been acknowledged, recent events have placed a greater emphasis on the importance of a school to be prepared. Incidents of extreme violence have changed the landscape of school safety.

Schools must be safe in order for students to learn, teachers to teach, and student academic achievement levels to improve. At a time when meeting mandated test scores and saving school budgets from continued financial cuts tend to be the areas of greatest concentration, school safety must also rank as an important issue. Historically, crisis preparedness has been focused mostly on events affecting the physical school structure. Practicing orderly evacuations and seeking appropriate shelter in the event of a fire or dangerous weather constituted most of the preparedness planning. However, in the 1990s a series of mass shootings at schools gained national attention and changed the focus of crisis planning to expand to include acts of violence (Cowan & Rossen, 2013).

Crisis preparedness is a necessary tool to reduce adverse consequences of a crisis situation. Preparing for a crisis can be an endless endeavor, but school administrators and community leaders must ensure appropriate crisis preparation is in place, practiced, and

revisited in order to remain effective. While comprehensive safe school planning will not necessarily guarantee the elimination of every act of violence on every school campus, Pollack and Sundermann (2001) maintain that schools that engage in preparing and implementing crisis plans effectively are “more likely to foster safe environments for their students and teachers” (p. 20). Preparing for a crisis is a proactive approach to keeping school environments safe, rather than being reactive and unprepared should a crisis occur (Graham et al., 2006).

Background

Increasingly, school personnel are required to respond to traumatic events that greatly impact the school and community in recent history. Tragic events at schools across the nation have raised the level of concern of every parent and educator about the safety of their school community. Schools are perhaps among the safest places for children, yet predicting and preventing violence on campus remains a serious concern for school officials on a daily basis (Jimerson, Brock, & Cowan, 2005). School safety is an increasing concern as school violence is a growing problem. Any instance of crime or violence at a school not only affects the individuals involved, but also the educational process, bystanders, and the surrounding community (Roberts, Kemp, Rathbun, & Morgan, 2014).

In the school setting, crisis is defined as “any situation faced by staff or students causing them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions that may interfere with their ability to perform at the scene or later” (MacNeil & Topping, 2007, p. 66). Crises tend to be far outside the normal experience of those involved. Regardless of the type of event, crises can cause disruption or chaos, involve serious physical risks, and trigger

emotional and psychological problems that can have long-term consequences (Reeves, Brock, & Crowan, 2008). Responding to crises and improving school safety are critical to the overall mission of learning at school. Much like planning an academic curriculum, Cowan and Rossen (2013) suggest considering the efforts in crisis response as being a cornerstone to school planning.

A string of high-profile traumatic events spanning nearly 20 years has proven explicitly that school crisis response is not a choice, but inevitable (Cowan & Rossen, 2013). While most schools will not face a tragedy as unthinkable as the horrific events of December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, where twenty students and six others were killed, every school will face crises of varying magnitude. There have been at least 90 school shootings in America since that terrible day (<http://everytown.org/article/schoolshootings/>). This does not account for mass shootings that have occurred in places outside of the school setting.

Incidents of violence in schools make the need for crisis planning clear. Gainey (2009) suggests that a crisis “jeopardizes the ability of the school to safeguard its mission, students, employees, and other stakeholders” (p. 268). Therefore, it is essential for schools to be crisis-ready and confident in their ability to undertake their mission of education in a safe and responsive environment. Crisis management proposes strategies for preparing for and handling crisis events, applies public relations strategies and tactics to prevent or modify the impact of a crisis on an organization, and minimizes damage (Gainey, 2009).

The nation's schools should be safe havens for teaching and learning, free of crime or violence. However, there has been no real reduction in the number of school shootings in the United States despite increased security in recent years. Everytown for Gun Safety (2014) reports that there were 44 school shootings that occurred in the fourteen months that followed the tragedy at Sandy Hook. These shootings occurred in 24 states across the country, with 64% taking place at K-12 schools. While the rate of school shootings is statistically unchanged since the 1990s, there have been about 500 school associated violent deaths since 1994 (Hefling, 2014).

Every school administration has a responsibility to provide appropriate policies, procedures, and strategies to maintain safe environments while ensuring the safety and general welfare of those in the schools. Due to recent incidents involving shootings and other crises, schools are conducting comprehensive reviews of these policies, procedures, and systems related to safety and security, including emergency management (Zatal-Wiener & Horwood, 2010). As with other critical issues school administrators face, building support to produce quality plans for managing emergencies is essential. Planning efforts should focus on minimizing effects and promoting recovery (Cowan & Rossen, 2013). Safety, orderliness, and caring in schools today cannot be assumed, but must be explicitly addressed. Riley (2012), Executive Director for The Center for the Prevention of School Violence, suggests

the establishment and maintenance of these conditions in schools are essential in efforts directed at creating excellent schools. With these conditions present, students are given the opportunity to perform at their best academically, and

teachers are provided with environments which allow them to perform at their best. (para. 1)

Creating safe, supportive schools is essential to ensuring students' academic and social success. However, balancing the need for security with the school's primary mission to educate and promote the well-being of their students can be challenging.

Statement of the Problem

Families trust schools to keep their children safe during the day. Fortunately, the majority of schools do remain safe thanks to the efforts of millions of administrators, teachers, and staff across America (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The unfortunate reality is that school districts throughout the country may be touched either directly or indirectly by a crisis of some kind at any time. Children find comfort in the adults who protect them. Knowing what to do when faced with a crisis can be the difference between calm and chaos, between courage and fear, between life and death (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). School and district personnel need to be ready to handle crises to keep children and staff out of harm's way and ready to learn and teach.

An increased prevalence of violence in American schools in recent history has shaken the complacency of school districts about the need for effective crisis management plans to be revisited. Examination of what school districts are doing to be prepared for crisis situations and provide insight into the biggest challenges that leaders face is critical to ensure that schools are safe and secure for students and staff members. Analyzing the preparedness of schools in light of the unfortunate events that have happened brings to the forefront the need to have leaders in place prepared to address crisis situations that may arise. Needs of schools as well as the populations they serve are

varied, but the fact remains that having a crisis management plan in place allows for the priority to remain at all times on safety and security in schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the status of crisis management in schools as perceived by elementary and middle school (K-8) public and private administrators in the state of Kansas. In addition, the purpose of this study was to analyze the readiness level of administrators and schools to respond to major crisis situations and identify to what extent collaboration is occurring between first responders and school administrators. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to explore training opportunities that have been made available to administrators, and analyze to what extent administrators face barriers in the implementation of crisis preparedness plans. Provided in this study is an analysis of crisis preparedness in schools for meeting new and continuing challenges in order to safely educate students as perceived by current K-8 principals in the state of Kansas.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to endorse the need for schools to have an appropriate crisis management plan in place and provide recommendations that will be valuable to other states and school districts as it relates to crisis preparedness. The findings of this study will offer data on crisis planning efforts of schools in Kansas that should inform other school leaders and community members to better prepare their schools in the event of a crisis. Analyzing the perceptions of school administrators on their individual and school-wide perceived level of preparedness in the event of a major crisis, exploring opportunities for collaboration efforts with community members in the

event of a crisis, identifying training opportunities that have been made available to administrators, and recognizing barriers faced by administrators in implementing effective crisis management plans will provide a basis for understanding the current readiness level of schools and add to the body of knowledge in crisis preparedness and management for schools.

Delimitations

“Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 134). The following delimitations were set for this study:

- The concentration of this study was on crisis management and preparedness, not the psychology behind the violence itself.
- The study was limited to public and private K-8 elementary and middle schools of varying populations and sizes.
- The focus of this study was only on schools in Kansas; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other states.

Assumptions

Assumptions are referred to as the “postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 135). Assumptions are factors that the researcher did not have control over and are assumed to be true. For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made: (a) schools have created some level of a crisis management plan, (b) participants were familiar with the concept of school crisis preparedness, and (c) participants accurately and honestly responded to the survey.

Research Questions

Creswell (2009) stated that research questions “shape and specifically focus the purpose of the study” (p. 132). The following research questions were used to guide this study:

RQ1. To what extent do K-8 school administrators perceive they are prepared for a major school crisis?

RQ2. To what extent do K-8 administrators differ in their perceptions of school-wide preparedness for a major school crisis according to the following demographic variables: school setting, type of school, gender of administrator, years of administrator experience, and highest degree obtained by the administrator?

RQ3. To what extent is collaboration occurring between first responders or other members of the community and administrators in regards to crisis preparedness?

RQ4. To what extent do K-8 administrators feel prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training that has been made available to assist them?

RQ5. To what extent do K-8 administrators face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of assisting the reader in an accurate interpretation of the intent and findings of this study, terms specific to this study have been identified and defined as follows:

Crisis/crises. Crises are referred to as events that cause severe emotional and social distress that may occur at any time and without warning, sometimes called critical incidents, disasters, emergencies, or traumatic incidents (MacNeil & Topping, 2007).

Crisis management. Crisis management “proposes strategies for preparing for and handling crisis events and applying public relations strategies and tactics to prevent or modify the impact of a crisis on the organization and minimize damage to the organization, stakeholders, and industry” (Gainey, 2009, p. 268).

Crisis-ready. Gainey (2009) identifies crisis-ready as “being prepared to respond to crisis through the development and implementation of formal crisis-management plans, planning for communication that builds relationships with stakeholders, and strategies for providing effective leadership of the school community” (p. 268).

Critical incident. Frequently confused with the term crisis, critical incident is defined as “any stressor event or stimulus that has the potential to lead to a crisis response in many individuals” (MacNeil & Topping, 2007, p. 66).

Mitigation. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) defines mitigation as “any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk of life and property from a hazard event” (p. 2.3).

Planning. Planning is “a dynamic process in which both short and long-term strategy can be adjusted in response to any contingency” (Regan, 2014, p. 52).

Preparation. Preparation involves planning, training, education, and practice (MacNeil & Topping, 2007).

Preparedness. Preparedness refers to “activities that takes place before a crisis and include plans to respond to any number of potential crises or traumatic events” (Cowan & Rossen, 2013, p. 11).

Prevention. MacNeil and Topping (2007) define prevention as taking the steps to identify and eliminate or reduce sources of risk.

Protection. Protection is “the capabilities to secure schools against acts of violence and manmade or natural disasters” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. 2).

Recovery. Recovery refers to the “task of rebuilding and returning to normalcy or previous levels of functioning after a crisis” (Cowan & Rossen, 2013, p. 11).

Response. Response “includes actions in the immediate and short-term aftermath of a crisis to ensure physical safety, prevent property damage, confirm details, and identify and respond to negative mental health outcomes” (Cowan & Rossen, 2013, p. 11).

Safe school. Riley (2012) defines a safe school as one whose “physical features, layout, policies, and procedures are designed to minimize the impact of disruptions and intrusions that might prevent the school from fulfilling its educational mission” (para. 1).

School climate. School climate “describes a range of campus conditions, including safety, relationships and management, and the environment, that may influence student learning and well-being” (Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools, n.d., School Climate and Emergencies section, para. 1).

Targeted violence. A term developed by the Secret Service, targeted violence refers to “any incident of violence where a known (or knowable) attacker selected a particular target prior to the attack” (Schuster, 2009, p. 42).

Threat assessment. Jimerson, Brock, and Cowan (2005) define threat assessment as “an optimal strategy for determining the credibility and seriousness of a threat and likelihood that it will be carried out” (p. 11).

Overview of the Methodology

A quantitative research design with descriptive analysis using survey methods was utilized for this study. Survey design methods provide a “numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). The Crisis Preparedness Survey was administered through a web-based questionnaire to gauge the perceptions of elementary and middle school (K-8) administrators on their level of preparedness for a school crisis situation. Public and private elementary and middle school principals in the state of Kansas were the population of interest, with the sample including the principals who responded to the survey. The 20-item survey was modified from a questionnaire used in a previous study examining Missouri school counselors’ perceptions of school crisis preparedness and training (Werner, 2007).

The statistical analyses employed in this study differed based on the research questions. For research questions one, three, four, and five, descriptive analysis was conducted. Descriptive analysis “tends to answer basic informational questions” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 31). Additionally, conclusions are drawn from descriptive research along with a reporting of facts. A factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to address research question two. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) suggest that the ANOVA “provides information about the interaction of the independent variable on the control variable at the different subgroup levels” (p. 47).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Included in chapter one was the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose statement, significance of the

study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, definition of terms, and overview of the methodology of the study. Offered in chapter two is a review of the literature on the history of school violence, phases of crisis management, school crisis plan components, models of crisis management, and lessons that have been learned regarding crisis preparedness. Identified in chapter three is the description of the methodology used in this study. It includes the research design, population and sample, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, hypothesis testing, and limitations. Presented in chapter four is the presentation of the findings of the study, including descriptive statistics and results of the hypothesis testing for the five research questions. Offered in chapter five is a summary of the study including an overview of the problem, purpose statement, and research questions; review of the methodology; findings related to the literature; and major findings, implications for action, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Society expects schools to provide a safe place for children. In trying to meet this expectation, school personnel are increasingly faced with handling emergency situations for which they have little or no training (Hull, 2000). Despite the low statistics, high-profile school shootings have fixed chilling images in the mind of the public, leading many to believe that schools are generally unsafe (Black, 2004). Whether through acts of mass terrorism, destructive natural disasters, or isolated school shootings, high-profile events have brought a renewed recognition that while schools as a whole are safe places, the unthinkable will happen somewhere at some point (Cowan & Rossen, 2013).

Most schools go about their daily business without the threat of violence or danger from disasters (Black, 2004). However, it is likely that every school district will face a crisis of some magnitude, thus making it important that individual schools are prepared for any type of crisis that could occur. These incidents occur without warning and create an increased concern for the safety of our children. During crisis situations, school personnel need to know what action to take in responding to the event (Aspiranti, Pelchar, McCleary, Bain, & Foster, 2011).

History of School Violence

Statistically, shootings are rare events in schools, representing less than 1% of the homicides among children ages 5-18, however, they are a very real and frightening part of school violence in the country (Schuster, 2009). Even one school shooting is too many, leaving terrible and lasting effects on the students, school, community, and nation.

Perhaps the earliest event of mass homicide on a school campus occurred in 1927 when a disgruntled former school board member arranged explosives intended to destroy an elementary school in Bath, Michigan, killing 43 people including 38 children.

Andrew Kehoe spent many months wiring dynamite throughout the basement of the school without encountering resistance from teachers or administrators. He succeeded in terrifying the town of Bath, Michigan (Collins, 2007). At the time, many viewed Kehoe's actions as an "anomaly in an otherwise safe environment, which did not warrant a proactive plan to prevent future occurrences" (Collins, 2007, p. 47).

One of the first school crisis incidents that received national attention occurred in 1976 when a busload of children were kidnapped in Chowchilla, California. The children and bus driver escaped after being transferred to a moving van buried in a rock quarry. It took the children 11 hours to escape through the hatch on the roof of the buried van (Aspiranti et al., 2011). Since the event at Chowchilla, interest in school violence has increased.

Another disaster that made the need for crisis preparedness apparent occurred on January 17, 1989 when an intruder began shooting at a crowded elementary playground in San Joaquin County in Cleveland, Ohio with an AK-47 assault rifle. When the shooting stopped, five children had been killed and thirty others had been wounded (Brock, 2000). This tragic event clearly demonstrated the importance of crisis intervention readiness.

During the 1990s, 28 instances of targeted violence occurred in America's public school systems (Collins, 2007). The deadliest years for school violence at that time ended with the massacre at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Eric Harris and

Dylan Klebold walked into Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado and began shooting. Thirteen people were killed and 21 others were injured before these students turned the guns on themselves. The events of that day marked one of the most devastating school shootings in United States history (Schuster, 2009). Collins (2007) suggests that the events at Columbine High School demanded a change in the mostly reactionary responses previously utilized by school administrators to address school violence.

Not all acts of violence at schools result in multiple casualties. In 2002, there was a rash of sniper shootings in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. One of these shootings targeted a 13-year-old boy outside of his middle school. The reality that schools are not secure reinforced the need to revisit crisis management plans as well as communication protocol with both internal and external stakeholders in addition to providing effective leadership within the culture of the school community (Gainey, 2009).

The second deadliest mass shooting in United States history, after the 2007 shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University that resulted in the deaths of 33 people, occurred on December 14, 2012 when 20 children and six teachers were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut (Marcus, 2013). Most of those killed were first grade students, only six years old. Gunman Adam Lanza shot his way through a glass door to gain entry to the school.

Marcus (2013) reports that between Columbine in 1999 and Sandy Hook in 2012, about 130 fatal school shootings had taken place. Now, “between instruction in reading and mathematics, students are learning to hide from gunmen” (Marcus, 2013, p. 4).

School districts are adding to their crisis plans and teaching children how to hide and barricade themselves in classrooms or closets as a result of these low-probability tragedies that have a high level of impact. There have been enough school shootings that ignoring them is not an option. Schools are now expected by their communities to create and follow a crisis plan which includes creating and following contingency plans, maintaining communication with emergency officials, training teachers in preventing and responding to violence, and considering the inconceivable.

A 2002 study conducted by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education examined 37 incidents of targeted school violence in the United States between December 1974 and May 2000. The study found that these were rarely sudden, impulsive acts. In 95% of the cases, the attacker had developed the idea to harm the target before the attack. Many of these critical incidents lasted no more than 20 minutes. One-quarter of these were over within five minutes (Schuster, 2009). Given the short duration of most school attacks, it is “crucial for schools to have prevention efforts and critical incident response plans in place” (Schuster, 2009, p. 44).

According to a 2006 national survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 95% of school districts had a comprehensive plan to address crisis preparedness, response, and recovery. Yet, in a national survey of more than 750 school-based police officers, about half of the officers said the emergency plans for schools were not adequate. More than 66% indicated school emergency plans were not practiced on regular basis (Schuster, 2009).

Zantal-Wiener and Horwood (2010) propose that “schools are dynamic environments with unique characteristics” (p. 53). In addition, schools serve students,

staff, and visitors from diverse backgrounds and varying abilities and disabilities. Because of this, schools and their community partners need to be prepared to respond to the distinctive needs of all students, staff, and visitors. Critical to educating and preparing our children to achieve their highest potential is creating safe, orderly, and welcoming learning environments. Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, and Pollitt (2013) advocate “efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning are not separate endeavors and must be designed, funded, and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach” (p. 2).

While it is unrealistic to think that all crises can be prevented, DiRaddio and Brock (2012) recommend that “having a crisis team and plan in place will help schools be as prepared as possible. Team members must be able to respond quickly and understand their roles during and following the crisis” (p. 16). Additionally, DiRaddio and Brock (2012) emphasize that facilitating a well-organized response during a crisis will help to express a sense of control, in turn reinstating a feeling of protection. Understanding the characteristics of a crisis, the level of response needed, being prepared and having a plan in place, knowing how to access additional resources, and responding in the appropriate manner can significantly change the outcome that a crisis will have on a school and its community (DiRaddio & Brock, 2012).

Phases of Crisis Management

The phases of crisis management are identified in the 2007 U.S. Department of Education’s Practical Information on Crisis Planning document and echoed by Reeves et al. (2008), suggesting

the integrity of a school's crisis response dramatically shapes the outcome, so it's important to have a multidisciplinary crisis or safety team and an active planning process to help school leaders successfully manage crisis of all types and minimize their negative impact. (p. 10)

They recommend that effective crisis management comprises of four integrated phases: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Prevention and mitigation. Mitigating or preventing crisis involves both the school district and community. Establishing key community partnerships and assessing safety and security needs and vulnerabilities occurs in the prevention and mitigation phase. The goal, as identified by Zantal-Wiener and Horwood (2010), is to address the "safety and integrity of facilities, security, culture, and climate of schools to ensure a healthy learning environment" (p. 55). According to the U. S. Department of Education (2007), "creating a safe and orderly learning environment should not be new to any school or district" (p. 2.4). In fact, many schools have programs in place that are aimed at preventing children and youth from initiating harmful behaviors. Life skill programs, anti-bullying programs, and school-wide discipline efforts are common across the nation as a means of helping reduce violent behavior.

Although schools have no control over some of the hazards that may impact them, such as earthquakes, they can diminish the impact of such incidents by training students and staff on what to do during tremors. Similarly, schools cannot control fights, bomb threats, and school shootings, but they can reduce the likelihood of such events. This might include instituting policies, implementing violence prevention programs, and other steps that would improve the culture and climate of their campus (U.S. Department of

Education, 2007). Schools with positive climates engage students in developing strong relationships with staff and peers, which increases the likelihood that students will report potential threats to trusted adults within the school.

Brickman, Jones, and Groom (2004) recommend that schools conduct safety assessments of each building during the prevention and mitigation phase. This includes conducting a survey of the school grounds and lighting to identify hazards, studying past safety audits or plans, coordinating crisis plans with local businesses, and reviewing policies for all potential school visitors. Information gained from these assessments should feed into the mitigation planning, and a safety audit should be part of normal operations.

Mitigation and prevention planning requires agencies and organizations to work together and share information, which makes communication among stakeholders critical. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) stresses the importance of communication within the planning team as well as with families and the larger community in order to convey a visible message that schools and local governments are working together to ensure public safety. Schools and districts should be active partners in community-wide risk assessment and mitigation planning. Dillon (2007) maintains “recognizing an impending crisis, and responding to it in an appropriate and timely manner can mean the difference between preparing for an emergency and dealing with it” (p. 11).

Reeves et al. (2008) emphasize that many schools are not equipped to respond appropriately to a crisis. Lack of equipment and expertise, failure to practice or review existing plans, and competing priorities such as devoting energy and resources to

academic issues are a few of the impediments to adequate emergency response.

Overcoming such obstacles, they suggest, requires school leaders to “recognize that crisis preparedness is not an option, but an imperative; crisis planning does not compete with schools’ education mission, but rather supports it; and genuine crisis response capacity builds ongoing prevention efforts and engagement” (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 10).

Preparedness. The preparedness phase consists of facilitating a rapid, coordinated, and effective response in the event of an emergency (Zantal-Wiener & Horwood, 2010). This includes identifying needs and goals using the data that was collected in the prevention and mitigation phase. Crises have the potential to affect every student and staff member in a school building. Despite everyone’s best efforts at crisis prevention, it is a certainty that crises will occur in schools. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) suggests “good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis occurs” (p. 3.1). Being well prepared involves an investment of time and resources.

During the preparedness phase, school administrators secure site plans for each building and have them readily accessible for first responders. Brickman et al. (2004) suggest that the site plans should include floor plans of the building, as well as identify every access to the building, including windows, doors, and ventilation shaft openings. In addition, they recommend these plans should include power and communication access points, control panels, shut-off valves, building access points for electric, gas, telephone, and cable lines. To ensure all pertinent information is included, administrators should develop these plans in conjunction with local police, fire, and emergency personnel.

Preparedness includes practicing emergency drills and crisis exercises for staff, students, and emergency responders. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) recommends the use of table top exercises where school staff and emergency responders discuss and help identify issues that need to be addressed in the crisis plan and problems with plans for communication and response. In addition, teachers need to be trained in how to manage students during a crisis, specifically for those experiencing panic reactions. Careful consideration of these issues, according to the U. S. Department of Education (2007) “will improve your crisis plan and better prepare you to respond to an actual crisis” (p. 3.11).

Preparing for an immediate response includes determining whether students and staff need to be evacuated from the building, returned to the building, or locked down in the building. Planning action steps for each of these scenarios is part of the preparedness phase. An evacuation requires all students and staff to leave the building, while lockdowns are called for when a crisis occurs outside of the school and an evacuation would be dangerous. Shelter-in-place is used when there is not time to evacuate or when it may be harmful to leave the building (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Finally, as part of the preparedness phase, Brickman et al. (2004) recommend that community leaders and parents or guardians should receive safety, evacuation, and secondary contact information. A method should be in place for tracking student release and ensuring that students are only released to authorized individuals.

Response. “A crisis is the time to follow the crisis plan, not to create a plan from scratch” (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. 4.1). Implementation of the emergency management plan occurs in the response phase. In addition to triggering the response

action, such as lockdown or evacuation, deployment of resources of various partners, making informed decisions, activating communication plans, and working with community partners or first responders also occurs according to Zantal-Wiener and Horwood (2010).

Brickman et al. (2004) describe the response phase as “developing a command center for responding to emergencies, drafting the plan with specific directions and checklists, and disseminating the plan to appropriate people in the community” (p. 31). People in the chain of command in each school should know where their plan is located and how it is organized.

In the response phase, school administrators develop multiple evacuation routes and secure meeting places for every type of crisis. An agreement should be in place ahead of time for a facility that could accommodate sufficient occupancy for a large number of students. A location for media, parents, and administrators to gather should be identified. In addition, all evacuation and meeting locations should be in close proximity to the respective school buildings, but at a safe distance from potential harm (Brickman et al., 2004). Once evacuated, students must not be allowed back on school grounds until law enforcement certifies that it is safe. School officials should be prepared to contact parents and the public to disseminate information regarding a crisis. Brickman et al. (2004) recommend that a safety plan should include directions for connecting parents with their children once the crisis is under control. This should address not only how school personnel will inform parents of a crisis and where to find their children, but also how the school intends to verify that the person claiming to be a student’s parent has the legal right to pick that child up at the evacuation point.

Communicating accurate and appropriate information during a crisis is critical. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) recommends that all information released to the media and public should be funneled through a single public information officer or appointed spokesperson in order to maximize the likelihood of presenting consistent and accurate information. Channels of communication should be outlined in the school's crisis plan. The school's most important responsibility is the safety of the students entrusted to the school by their families, which cannot be fulfilled during a crisis without timely and accurate information.

It is impossible for any crisis plan, no matter how complete, to address every situation that may arise during a crisis. However, the U. S. Department of Education (2007) advocates that "with proper training and practice, emergency responders and staff will be able to respond appropriately and to adapt the school crisis plans to the situation" (p. 4.5). Documentation of actions taken during the response will provide a record of appropriate implementation of the crisis plan as well as a recording of damage for insurance purposes and tracking financial expenditures related to the incident. These notes and records become legal documents.

Recovery. Restoring a safe and healthy learning environment is the goal of the recovery phase. Zantal-Wiener and Horwood (2010) submit that the recovery phase includes supporting the physical recovery of the school facilities, ensuring that business operations continue, facilitating the academic recovery, and assisting and maintaining the emotional health of students and staff. The goal of recovery, as identified by the U.S. Department of Education (2007) is to "return to learning and restore the infrastructure of the school as quickly as possible" (p. 5.1). One of the major goals of recovery is to

provide a caring and supportive school environment and to return to the business of teaching and learning as soon as possible.

The recovery phase of crisis response can take time, depending on the degree and extent of the trauma. Certainly, students and staff members may have delayed reactions, but administrators should continue to be observant and ensure that resources continue to be available as long as necessary. Effective intervention during recovery will promote academic learning and not detract from it (Reeves et al., 2008). After a crisis, healing is a process that can be filled with difficulties. Depending on the pace at which an individual recovers from a crisis, recovery may take months or even years.

Brickman et al. (2004) emphasize that it is important that such planning continues to evolve. Administrators can make schools as safe as possible with the help of federal and state agencies, school attorneys, district staff members, parents, and the community, so if a crisis does occur, “they will be prepared to act rather than react” (Brickman et al., 2004, p. 35). Reeves et al. (2008) uphold that effective crisis response is grounded in prevention and preparedness. They suggest that proper approaches “focus on preventing crises before they occur, preparing for those crises that cannot be prevented and fostering students’ resiliency so that they are able to better cope with crisis” (p. 11).

There are many obstacles that administrators face when creating, updating, and implementing school crisis management plans. It is important to note that the research on what works in school crisis planning is in its early stages. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) suggests that “while a growing body of research and literature is available on crisis management for schools, there is little hard evidence to quantify best practices” (p. 1.4). Since major crises are rare and vary in scope and intensity in our

nation's schools, information obtained relies on what is known about crisis preparedness in a variety of settings. Information provided, mainly through interviews with individuals who have experienced crisis situations first-hand, supports school administrators and community members with valuable information on crisis management. MacNeil and Topping (2007) suggest that much of the current practice is based on clinical judgment, which is a notable quality. However, the "effectiveness of a number of current practices is being questioned and, as yet, they are unproven" (MacNeil & Topping, 2007, p. 85).

Hundreds of pieces of legislation were introduced in 2013 in response to proponents of greater restrictions on guns arguing that school safety improvements should focus on prevention, counseling and crisis preparedness (Kennedy, 2013). State agencies and school districts have pursued numerous measures to make schools safer for students and staff. Proposals include additional security patrols, video surveillance and access-control systems, identification badges for staff and visitors, fewer building entrances, more safety drills, and updated crisis-preparedness plans (Kennedy, 2013).

Components of School Crisis Plan

Cornell and Sheras (1998) suggest that crises are by definition "rare and often unexpected events and no plan can anticipate the unique circumstances and special challenges associated with each crisis event" (p. 297). However, some crises begin as difficulties or isolated problems that escalate over time, therefore, a crisis is more "usefully conceptualized as a process than an event" (Cornell & Sheras, 1998, p. 297). While plans are integral to successful crisis response, equally important is the process by which school personnel implement their plan. There is not one pre-established crisis plan that will fit the needs of all schools, but schools will share similar concerns such as

school violence, fire, and vandalism. Therefore, Aspiranti et al. (2011) recommend a Comprehensive Crisis Plan Checklist (CCPC) that was designed to guide administrators and practitioners in public and private school settings who are constructing or re-evaluating crisis plans.

The main concern both during and after a crisis incident is the students' physical safety and mental well-being. For this reason, Aspiranti et al. (2011) maintain that it is "essential that each school has a team that responds during the crisis and follows a prescribed plan outlining actions that addresses most, if not all, possible crisis situations" (p. 147). In addition, the checklist is based on three tiers of crisis intervention: primary prevention, secondary intervention, and tertiary intervention. Primary prevention is to attempt to prevent problems before they arise; secondary intervention occurs during or in the immediate aftermath of a crisis to minimize the effects to keep the crisis from escalating; and tertiary intervention involves long-term and follow-up counseling and assistance (Aspiranti et al., 2011).

Hull (2000) recommends that school emergency response plans should be organized into three major categories of events: people crises, natural disasters, and physical plant or technology hazards. This plan, he suggests "will always be a work in progress, continually evolving as society changes" (p. 69). District and building teams should work together during planning, training, and responding to crises. Cooperation such as this will provide strength to crisis plans (Hull, 2000). Perhaps, as suggested by Black (2004), no school crisis plan can be absolutely perfect, but "effective crisis planning involves paying attention to both large and small details" (p. 38).

Cornell and Sheras (1998) advocate that leadership, teamwork, and having an appropriate sense of responsibility will help staff members carry out management plans effectively, helping students to learn and grow from even the most difficult of experiences. An effective crisis management plan, as recommended by Brock (2000) is in the form of a policy statement that documents staff members' responsibilities and affirms the school or district's intention to prepare for traumatic events. The document is shared with the public and is used to hold schools accountable. It is not enough to just adopt a plan, but it must be implemented. School leaders must not only be committed to crisis preparedness, but must also acquire and publish the knowledge to carry out the crisis intervention (Brock, 2000). This includes allocating time and resources needed for training.

MacNeil and Topping (2007) contend that while crisis management plans for schools have been widely recommended with consistency related to the components and content, they suggest that it appears "there has been no assessment and evaluation of the application and effectiveness of either the individual elements or of crisis plans as a whole" (p. 80). Because there is no definitive confirmation for the effectiveness of crisis plans in schools, it would be beneficial for schools to ensure that their plans are flexible and open to change during the course of a potential crisis situation.

School Climate

Establishing a safe school climate through prevention programming that focuses on physical and psychological safety is critical. Reeves et al. (2008) believe that the "basic components of school safety also promote academic achievement and positive behavior" (p. 11). Teachers and administrators support a climate of safety when they pay

attention to students' social and emotional needs as well as their academic needs.

Emphasizing emotional needs as well as academic needs allow students to be less likely to engage in or be victimized by harmful behavior (Maida, 2012).

Dillon (2007) recommends that schools can make themselves unsuitable targets for unstable individuals by fostering a positive and inviting school climate and teaching and modeling good behavior. In addition, students and staff can be encouraged to be “the eyes and ears of the building” (Dillon, 2007, p. 10). Shah (2013) advocates for the importance of a healthy school climate and the role that students and families have in the steps schools should take. He maintains that by building relationships with students, “staff members can intervene if they suspect a student is in trouble, notify authorities if they learn a student is planning to endanger others, and counsel students during and after a crisis” (Shah, 2013, p. 14).

Beyond discouraging poor behavior, Dillon (2007) suggests that schools should aim to build healthy and supportive environments by encouraging good behavior through school programs and community service projects as well as overtly teaching social skills, such as how to listen and communicate, manage anger, and resolve conflicts. In essence, “everyone in the school must assume the role of hallway monitor, keeping an eye out for suspicious behavior and reporting it promptly” (Dillon, 2007, p. 10). These measures should be supported through safety policies, clearly defined rules, and training for faculty, staff, and students on how to recognize a troubled individual who might make threats or harass and intimidate others (Dillon, 2007).

Creating safe, supportive schools is essential to safeguarding the academic and social success of students. Furlong, Felix, Sharkey, and Larson (2005) advise that school

leaders must maintain control of the campus and develop a climate that allows each teacher and student to fully engage in learning. In addition, acquiring parent and community support in developing and maintaining an efficient and responsive crisis preparedness program is necessary to foster collaboration. This allows for the powerful message that school safety is a shared community concern (Furlong et al., 2005).

PREPaRE Model of Crisis Management and Training

The need for school officials to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a variety of crises has received increased attention from researchers, school personnel, and legislators (Brock, Nickerson, Reeves, Savage, & Woitaszewski, 2011). Despite this attention, most schools struggle to balance priorities for educating students with other administrative responsibilities. Brock et al. (2011) report that there is no federal law directing school crisis planning, but 32 states have laws or policies addressing crisis plans, 85% of school districts require such planning, and 95% of school districts have these plans, whether they are required or not. Despite these statistics, “there appears to be significant variability in the adequacy of crisis plans” (Brock et al., 2011, p. 35). Therefore, there is a need for effective professional development programs to facilitate school crisis prevention and intervention.

Recognizing a need for training focused specifically on school crisis response, the development of PREPaRE began in 2003. Sponsored by the National Association of School Psychologists, PREPaRE is a school crisis prevention and intervention training curriculum that is grounded in research and strives to integrate the U.S. Department of Education’s phases of crisis management (Brock et al., 2011). The PREPaRE acronym, as defined by Reeves et al. (2008) reflects the components of school crisis response that

occur during the four phases of crisis management. This includes preventing and preparing for psychological trauma, reaffirming physical health and perceptions of security, providing interventions, responding to psychological needs, and examining the effectiveness of crisis prevention and intervention.

“PREPaRE combines important aspects of crisis team development, plan development, and community collaboration with training on the mental health implications for youth when a crisis occurs” (Brock et al., 2011, p. 36). Additionally, the prevention and preparedness elements of PREPaRE offer “guidance on improving school safety and climate; student behavior, academic functioning, and resilience; and staff response capabilities. PREPaRE’s response and recovery elements provide training in immediate crisis interventions” (Brock et al., 2011, p. 36).

Recounting how the Charleston County School District responded to a crisis event, Bernard, Rittle, and Roberts (2011) identified the acronym PREPaRE as referring to a range of crisis response activities:

P - prevent and prepare for psychological trauma;

R - reaffirm physical health and perceptions of security and safety;

E - evaluate physiological trauma risk;

P a R - provide interventions and respond to psychological needs;

E - examine the effectiveness of crisis prevention and intervention. (para. 3)

Recognizing that the events they endured changed the lives of many involved, Bernard et al. (2011) suggest that although individuals continue to recover, the structure and framework of the PREPaRE model allowed their crisis team to “enter each situation with confidence and hope” (Bernard et al., 2011, para 16).

As suggested by the National Association of School Psychologist's PREPaRE Model of Crisis Response, there are four levels of school crisis response. DiRaddio and Brock (2012) define these levels as first, second, third and fourth. The first level is used when crisis events are not highly traumatic and can be managed using available school resources without personnel leaving their traditional school roles. The second level is building level. Although the crisis event is potentially traumatic, available school resources can manage the crisis.

The third and fourth levels of school crisis response are district and regional level. These events, they suggest, have the potential to be highly traumatic and require the building level personnel to leave their traditional roles. School personnel will need to call in resources and crisis interveners. Although the majority of principals will not have to guide their school through a crisis that requires a community response, nearly every administrator will face multiple crises throughout their career that warrant a minimal response.

ALICE Training

Training that is increasingly occurring in schools and other workplaces uses run, hide, and fight as an alternative to waiting for law enforcement to arrive in the event of an active shooter. One of these training programs is known as ALICE. ALICE, defined by the ALICE Training Institute (2015) stands for Alert – Lockdown – Inform – Counter – Evaluate. Alert is used to inform as many people as possible that a potentially life threatening situation exists through the use of plain language. Lockdown might include barricading the room or being prepared to evacuate or counter if needed. Inform includes using any means necessary to pass on clear and direct information. Counter means to

create noise or movement to distract the intent of the shooter. Evacuate is removing yourself in a safe and strategic way (ALICE Training Institute, 2015).

Based on the principle that “every circumstance is different and that there is no one-size-fits-all method for survival” (McKay, 2014, para 28), ALICE is a “toolbox that provides options other than the traditional actions of lockdown and wait” (McKay, 2014, para 18). Heavy emphasis is on active shooter scenarios with the ALICE approach. Proponents of this training say that this type of countermeasure is meant only as a last resort and is an alternative to the traditional lockdown procedure, which can produce easy targets, or “sitting ducks.” The point is to present victims with options beyond locking doors, turning off lights, and hoping the shooter will not see them because sometimes the safest option might not be sitting in the dark (Montgomery, 2015).

ALICE training emphasizes the idea that hiding under a desk or lying down on the floor might be counterproductive when it comes to survival. McKay (2014) cautions that it is a method of “mitigating the circumstances of an active shooter incident once that happens. It’s not meant to replace assessments of facilities and the mental health of students and employees” (para 31). Opponents of this type of training suggest that more common types of violence are being overshadowed by the active shooter publicity. For example, the emphasis on active shooters diminishes other important trainings such as tornado drills, CPR, and shelter in place (McKay, 2014). Additionally, people think ALICE asks too much of administrators, teachers, and students, and lacks key components to crisis preparedness such as conducting threat assessments, all-hazards training, and collaboration (McKay, 2014). McKay (2014) stresses that prior

collaboration with law enforcement and fire and EMS is an important part of mitigating events.

A reported 1,600 school districts and 1,700 police departments nationwide have employed the principles of ALICE training to alert, run, fight, or given the situation, go to a traditional lockdown (Montgomery, 2015). While it allows participants to feel more active than passive, critics urge districts to proceed cautiously, especially in the school setting where young students are involved because the effect of these drills is still unknown.

Lessons Learned

Many schools have made meaningful safety improvements following a number of school shootings in recent years. Lessons learned from high profile violent incidents reinforce the importance of ongoing staff training, evaluating security measures, and testing school crisis plans to protect school students, staff and facilities (Trump & Lavarello, 2003). However, school officials must develop prevention strategies and emergency measures to plan, prepare, and practice for the worst possible incidents of violence.

April 2009 marked the 10th anniversary of the Columbine High School attack. Trump (2009) reported at that time that schools had a higher level of awareness of safety issues and preparedness than they did before 1999, but the most challenging obstacle in many school communities had become complacency. Time and distance between major high-profile tragedies breeds contentment and can fuel denial. When major school safety situations are not in the news, it becomes too easy for day-to-day education activities to surpass safety, security, and emergency preparedness planning (Trump, 2009).

Richtig and Hornak (2003) visited sites of school shootings that included Pearl, Michigan; Jonesboro Arkansas; Paducah, Kentucky; Port Huron, Michigan; and Littleton, Colorado as part of a multidisciplinary, grant-funded youth Violence Task Force to conduct extensive interviews with the people who responded to the tragedies to learn what worked and what did not work in their responses to school violence. While they report that the “lessons learned from living through tragedy are extensive” (Richtig & Hornak, 2003, p. 21), they identified the following 12 lessons:

1. Have an unpublished telephone number and a separate line coming into the office. This allows for central office and emergency personnel to communicate when telecommunication is blocked with frantic calls for information.
2. Have a plan in place for when a crisis occurs at a neighboring school because fears about loved ones can cause chaos when media reports about another school are heard.
3. Review traffic patterns with local law enforcement because emergency vehicles might find it impossible to get to the school site when parents drive to the school area.
4. Develop a media plan because media can take advantage and attempt to control situations. In this case, boundaries must be set to keep media from being intrusive.
5. Prepare emergency boxes with important information about the school and put them in different locations. These boxes might include school floor plans,

classroom locations, student and faculty information, etc. It is important that these are updated regularly and ensure they are available in an emergency.

6. Identify an area away from the school for student relocation or dismissal and have a process to sign students out. Ideally, this would be away from the school in an area that can handle traffic. It is important to let parents know the basic plan ahead of time, then they can listen to media reports for more information.
7. Use name tags to identify students and staff. Identification tags allow for the prevention of confusion and chaos if students are sent to area hospitals during a crisis situation.
8. Hire a school liaison officer as a necessary component of communication and safety. This allows for more professionally managed responses and offers invaluable support to principals, parents, and students.
9. Consider placing emergency response containers or disaster kits that contain blankets and medical supplies in strategic places around the building. These could be valuable during any school violence incident.
10. After a crisis, require professional support staff to participate in crisis counseling. This would potentially prevent posttraumatic stress that could occur later.
11. Create two plans to deal with crises. The first plan would be a school crisis response team and the other would be a districtwide emergency management plan that would involve other agencies in the community.

12. Develop a positive working relationship with other community agencies, including law enforcement, fire departments, the media, hospitals, the clergy, and mental health and court officials. This allows for crises to be handled more smoothly from the beginning to well afterwards. (Richtig & Hornak, 2003, pp. 21-24).

Additionally, Richtig and Hornak (2003) suggested that these lessons learned were powerful, meaningful, and had common messages. In every school district they interviewed, communication and media management were overwhelming concerns. Therefore, they suggest that “principals must, through collaboration across their communities, establish an effective site-specific school response team, be well trained, and be part of the districtwide emergency management plan” (Richtig & Hornak, 2003, p. 24).

Analysts also reviewed the Sandy Hook School Shooting summary report that was released by the Newton, Connecticut officials. Dorn, Dorn, Satterly, Shepherd, and Nguyen (2013) came to a number of significant conclusions about the mass shooting, but emphasize that strategies that were proven to work in other active shooter incidents also applied in this case. For example, locking interior doors worked although the locked front entry door was breached, but because most of the staff and students in the school survived, evidence shows that “lockdown is still one of our most effective tools to prevent death in mass casualty school shootings” (Dorn et al., 2013, p. 16).

Furthermore, lockdowns must be implemented quickly. In the case at Sandy Hook, while the lockdown procedure that was taken did protect the majority of the other occupants, most of the deaths occurred in classrooms where the doors were not locked in

time. This incident demonstrates the need for all school personnel to be “properly trained, specifically empowered and practiced in making independent decisions to implement a lockdown, evacuation or sheltering for severe weather without being instructed by anyone to do so” (Dorn et al., 2013, p. 16). All school staff should be trained on how to respond under stress and not remain passive when they encounter an active aggressor in a closed area. More importantly, school staff should be trained to act.

School administrators have a “moral, ethical, and legal responsibility to protect students, staff, and facilities as reasonably as possible” (Trump & Lavarello, 2003, p. 21). Whether the crisis involves violence, terrorism, or natural disaster, the lesson remains the same for administrators to plan, prepare, and practice. Ongoing staff training, evaluating security measures, and testing school crisis plans will help school leaders to meet this obligation. If schools are to be safe, school administrators must take security programs and crisis preparedness planning seriously. After all, schools should be places of learning and development, not violence and fear. While the odds are slim that a homicide will occur at or near a school, “preparing for the worst is the best thing a school can do” (Dillon, 2007, p. 11).

Parents, teachers, administrators, and emergency professionals all play an important part in helping students deal with crises and return to the learning environment. The first concern after a crisis affects a school, as identified by Paine (2009) is meeting the needs of students by ensuring:

their physical and psychological safety, mitigating stressors that can interfere with learning, ensuring that communication is clear and factual, identifying and monitoring those who are at the greatest risk for developing a

serious trauma reaction, and restoring a sense of normalcy as soon as possible. (p. 13)

To that end, school crisis response is part of a comprehensive safe schools plan.

Administrators should update staff members annually about the specifics of their school crisis plan. This information should then be viewed as critical staff training. Ideally, Paine (2009) recommends that community service providers who might be called in to support the school should participate in the training sessions to enhance collective understanding and collaboration.

Obstacles and Challenges

Gainey (2009) identifies training, lack of time, personnel, and financial resources for adequate crisis-management preparation and training as potential challenges leading to crisis-ready school districts. Additionally, Aspiranti et al. (2011) suggest that some school personnel may believe that planning for a school crisis may make it seem as if those incidents happen every day, or trivialize crisis situations.

For many administrators, providing timely in-service training is difficult because most in-service activities for faculty members are concentrated on academic issues or job responsibilities and duties. However, Brunner and Lewis (2006) caution that “a lack of preparation may result in greater tragedy and a tarnished reputation for both the principal and the overall school community” (p. 46). Therefore, care should be taken and time allocated for the training of all staff members to assume the role of first responder in the event of a school crisis.

The size of the school community may present other challenges for schools to customize crisis plans. A large urban school may place more emphasis on a school-based

team, whereas a rural school may have more need for outside professionals due to the small amount of resources available within the school (Aspiranti et al., 2011). The makeup of the crisis team should reflect the needs of the community. School personnel need to be aware of special plans or accommodations that will need to be made due to the specific needs, unique location, or student population of their school community.

Summary

Provided in this review of the literature was an overview of the historical perspective of school violence and rationale for the need for schools to have crisis management programs in place. Additionally, the phases of crisis management were defined, components of school crisis plans was described, the need for establishing a safe school climate was offered, a description of the PREPaRE and ALICE models of crisis management and training was reviewed, and obstacles faced in the implementation of a crisis management plan was explored. Finally, from the literature reviewed, lessons learned from previous crisis events that have occurred were discussed.

Presented in chapter three is the research design of the current study, population, sample, and sampling procedure, instrumentation and measurement tools. In addition, offered in chapter three is the study's data collection procedure, data analysis, hypothesis testing, and limitations.

Chapter Three

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the preparedness level of elementary and middle school (K-8) administrators in the event of a crisis. In addition, identification of collaboration opportunities administrators have to support crisis preparedness efforts as well as perceived barriers that administrators face in the implementation of crisis preparedness plans are addressed. Included in chapter three is the research design, population and sample, sampling procedures, instrumentation, measurement, validity and reliability, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and limitations of the study.

Research Design

Utilized in this study was a quantitative research design employing survey methods. Survey design methods provide a “numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). The advantage of the survey over many other research methods is that it is cost effective, and data collection is timely. In addition, it is advantageous to identify attributes of a large population from a small group of individuals (Creswell, 2009). The survey was administered through a web-based questionnaire to measure K-8 administrators’ perceptions of the level of preparedness for a school crisis situation. In addition, demographic factors including setting, type of school, administrator gender, administrators’ years of experience, and highest degree obtained by the administrator were acquired. Examined in the study were perceptions of K-8 administrators on their level of preparedness in the event of a serious crisis situation along with the identification

of collaboration efforts that existed with first responders or other community members in crisis preparedness. Additionally, examined in this study were occasions of training opportunities that administrators have received to handle crisis situations, and the exploration of perceived barriers faced by administrators in implementing effective crisis management plans.

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised of 1,219 public and private elementary and middle school (K-8) administrators in the state of Kansas. The sample consisted of the K-8 principals who responded to the survey.

Sampling Procedures

Total population sampling was used in this study. Principals were selected to be part of the study if their school was a public or private elementary or middle school located in Kansas. Selection of principals was based on the 2014-2015 Educational Directory from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). The sample included the principals who voluntarily responded to the survey.

Instrumentation

The Crisis Preparedness Survey is a 20-item survey used to examine the perceptions of elementary and middle school (K-8) principals regarding crisis preparedness in schools. The Crisis Preparedness Survey was adapted with permission (see Appendix A) from Werner's (2007) School Crisis Preparedness Survey, which was developed to explore Missouri school counselors' perceptions of school crisis preparedness and training. The survey was modified from its original version to reflect the change of the participants to school administrators instead of counselors. In addition,

the order of the survey items was changed from the original version and an item regarding barriers to implementation was added.

The survey was modified in order to elicit K-8 administrators' perceptions regarding their own crisis preparedness level as well as the preparedness level as a school. The scales for the first 10 items on the survey were written in a Likert-type format to determine administrators' perceptions of each item. Each item included a neutral option for the administrator as a response item. The survey contained four open-ended items. These items were added to the instrument in order to gain information about crisis preparedness that could not be obtained utilizing a closed question format. These items provided the participant the opportunity to expand on their perceptions of crisis preparedness and allowed them to address issues relevant to crisis preparedness that were not covered in the instrument. The remaining six items were used to gather demographic information of the respondent. The web-based survey can be found in Appendix B.

Measurement. The variable in research question 1 was the administrators' perceived preparedness for a major crisis, measured by survey item 1. This was assessed on the following 5-point Likert-type scale: *Not Prepared* = 1, *Somewhat Prepared* = 2, *Fairly Prepared* = 3, *Moderately Prepared* = 4, and *Extremely Prepared* = 5. Additional information obtained for this research question was measured by item 12 that assessed what administrators need, if anything, to feel more prepared for a crisis in an open-ended response format.

The variable in research question 2 was the difference in perceptions of the administrators regarding the school-wide preparedness level as related to demographic

variables. This was measured by survey items 4 and 15-20. Item 4 was measured on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*Not Prepared*) to 5 (*Extremely Prepared*). Demographic data were collected in items 15-20.

Research question 3 addressed collaboration efforts between first responders or other community members and administrators in regard to crisis preparedness. The variables were measured by items 9 and 14 on the survey. Item 9 addressed to what degree a school received support from the community to meet the needs of crisis preparedness. This was measured on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*No Support*) to 5 (*Extreme Support*). Item 14 provided an opportunity for the participants to identify collaboration opportunities they have had with community members in support of their crisis preparedness efforts using an open-ended response format.

The variable in research question 4 was the K-8 administrators' perceptions of preparedness as a result of training opportunities that had been made available to them. This was measured by items 2, 8, and 11 on the survey. Items 2 and 8 measured to what degree the administrator was prepared for a crisis as a result of training they had received and how important they felt the training was. This was measured by a Likert-type scale from 1 (*Not Prepared/Important*) to 5 (*Extremely Prepared/Important*) if training had been received at all.

Research question 5 addressed the perceived barriers K-8 administrators face in the creation and implementation of effective crisis management plans. This variable was measured by items 10 and 13 on the survey. Item 10 addressed the degree to which administrators felt barriers existed in the implementation of a crisis preparedness plan, measured with a Likert-type scale from 1 (*No Barriers*) to 5 (*Extreme Barriers*). Item 13

was an open-ended response format that provided the participant the opportunity to identify barriers to the implementation of their crisis preparedness plan.

Validity and reliability. Consideration was given to the means by which quantitative data were collected in order to establish validity and reliability of the instrumentation. “Validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 181). Werner (2007) established content validity by distributing the survey to an expert panel based on job responsibilities and experience. The current survey was modified for the purpose of this study. Some of the survey items were placed in a different order from the original version based on feedback obtained from five administrators whom reviewed the survey to verify the validity of the modified survey instrument. The experts were practicing principals of both public and private schools in Kansas. The survey was administered to these principals to determine if it appeared to be a valid measure of the perception of crisis preparedness.

Reliability is “the degree to which an instrument consistently measures whatever it is measuring” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 182). Werner (2007) established reliability through an internal consistency reliability analysis. A Cronbach’s alpha value was obtained for each of the scales revealing two scales with excellent reliability and one with adequate reliability. The reliability coefficients for the three scales were individual perception scale (.88), school-wide perception scale (.81), and importance of preparedness scale (.70) (Werner, 2007). Reliability evidence was obtained on the current study’s sample data and is reported in chapter four.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to collecting data, a Proposal for Research (see Appendix C) was submitted to the Baker Institutional Review Board (IRB) requesting approval for the study.

Approval from the committee was granted on July 6, 2015. The letter of approval can be found in Appendix D. Data in this study were collected using the Crisis Preparedness Survey. An email was sent to 1,219 public and private K-8 principals in Kansas on July 24, 2015 using the Elementary and Middle School principal list serves provided by KSDE. Principals were asked to participate in the study by responding to a survey using Google Docs. The email included the link that would take the administrator directly to the online survey. One school district blocked their principals from receiving or completing the survey without the completion of an application to conduct research for the district. The application was submitted to the district on July 27, 2015, but no response was received. A second school district blocked the survey as well, but no response was received when a verbal and written request to conduct research was presented. Therefore, 46 email addresses were removed from the original list in addition to 101 more that were undeliverable due to inaccurate contact information. The updated potential sample was changed to 1,072.

A second email was sent to the 1,072 principals in the updated sample on August 10, 2015, two weeks following the initial request for participation to maximize response rates. Additionally, a final request email was sent on August 19, 2015 thanking those who had completed the survey and announcing the closing of the survey at the end of one more week. The survey closed on August 26, 2015. See Appendix E for copies of the communication eliciting participation. Potential participants had access to complete the

survey for a total of 34 days. No risk was involved to any participant who elected to respond to the survey.

After the results of the Google Docs survey were compiled, an Excel spreadsheet was produced that included data from all administrators who completed the survey. Data were then input into IBM® SPSS® Faculty Pack 23 for Windows for analysis.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

A quantitative methodology with descriptive analysis was used to gain insight into the perceptions of school administrators regarding crisis preparedness.

RQ1. To what extent do K-8 school administrators perceive they are prepared for a major school crisis?

H1. K-8 school administrators perceive they are prepared for a major crisis.

A descriptive analysis was conducted to address to what extent K-8 administrators perceive they are prepared for a major school crisis.

RQ2. To what extent do K-8 administrators differ in their perceptions of school-wide preparedness for a major school crisis according to the following demographic variables: school setting, type of school, gender of administrator, administrators' years of experience, and highest degree obtained by the administrator?

H2. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness among school settings.

H3. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness between the types of schools.

H4. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness between male and female administrators.

H5. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness among administrators' years of experience.

H6. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness among administrators' highest degrees obtained.

A factorial ANOVA was conducted to address to what extent administrators differ according to demographic variables. The categorical variables used to group the administrators were school setting (urban, rural, suburban), type of school (public, private), gender (male, female), years of experience (less than a year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, over 10 years), and highest degree obtained (bachelors, masters, doctorate, other). The ANOVA was used to test main effects for the five hypotheses. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ3. To what extent is collaboration occurring between first responders or other members of the community and administrators in regards to crisis preparedness?

H7. Collaboration is occurring between first responders or other members of the community and K-8 administrators in regards to crisis preparedness.

A descriptive analysis was conducted to address to what extent collaboration is occurring between the community and K-8 administrators in regards to a crisis.

RQ4. To what extent do K-8 administrators feel they are prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training opportunities that have been made available to assist them?

H8. K-8 administrators feel prepared as a result of training opportunities that have been made available to them.

A descriptive analysis was conducted to address to what extent K-8 administrators feel prepared as a result of training opportunities that have been made available them.

RQ5. To what extent do K-8 administrators face barriers in the creation and implementation of effective crisis preparedness plans?

H9. K-8 administrators face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans.

A descriptive analysis was conducted to address to what extent K-8 administrators face barriers in the implementation of their preparedness plans.

Limitations

Limitations of a study are “factors that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings or on the generalizability of the results” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 133).

The study had the following limitations:

1. Participants who did not respond to the survey may have responded differently than participants who did respond.
2. The results of the study were limited since survey responses were self-reported and participants may not have accurately or fully self-evaluated themselves or their schools.
3. The research was limited by the response rate of the sample.
4. Administrators invited to participate in the study was limited to the accuracy of contact information obtained; therefore, not all administrators may have been reached to participate in the study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of the preparedness level of K-8 school administrators in the event of a crisis. Offered in chapter three was the purpose of the study and a detailed explanation of how each survey item corresponded to

each research question. A total population sampling of all public and private elementary and middle school principals in Kansas was used and the survey employed in the study was described. Data collection procedures and methods of data analysis were discussed and methods of data analysis were identified. Limitations of the study were also stated. Presented in chapter four are the findings from the current study, including results of the descriptive analyses and hypotheses testing for the five research questions.

Chapter Four

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the status of crisis management in schools as perceived by K-8 school administrators in the state of Kansas. Additional purposes of this study were to analyze the perceptions of the readiness levels of administrators and schools to respond to major crisis situations, identify to what extent collaboration is occurring between first responders and school administrators, explore training opportunities that have been made available to administrators, and analyze to what extent administrators face barriers in the implementation of effective crisis preparedness plans.

Presented in this chapter are the results of the data analysis. Descriptive statistics are used to define the sample and the results of the hypotheses testing associated with each of the five research questions posed for this study are addressed.

Reliability Analysis

After data collection, internal consistency values were calculated for the three scales using Cronbach's alpha. The individual preparedness scale (survey items 1, 2, and 3) had strong internal consistency, $\alpha = .889$. The school-wide preparedness scale (survey items 4, 5, and 6) had moderate internal consistency, $\alpha = .660$. The importance of crisis preparedness (survey items 7 and 8) had moderately strong internal consistency, $\alpha = .758$.

Descriptive Statistics

The population for this study comprised of elementary and middle school (K-8) administrators in the state of Kansas. The sample for this study included the K-8 principals in the state of Kansas who responded to the survey. Out of 1,072 K-8

administrators who received the survey, 216 responded for a response rate of 20%. Respondents were able to skip items on the survey; therefore, not all items had 216 responses. Out of the 215 respondents who responded to the demographic data, 49.8% ($n = 107$) of the respondents were female while 50.2% ($n = 108$) were male. Additionally, 78.6% ($n = 169$) of the respondents reported their type of institution as being a public school while 21.4% ($n = 46$) reported being in a private school. The average enrollment of the school for which the administrators reported was 347 students. Table 1 displays the number and percentage of the type of setting for which the respondent's school ($n = 214$) resides.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for School Setting

Setting	<i>F</i>	%
Urban	33	15.4
Rural	127	59.3
Suburban	54	25.2
Total	214	100.0

Respondents varied in their years of experience as an administrator from 10.2% reporting they had 1-2 years of experience to 44% who reported they had more than 10 years of experience as an administrator. Table 2 displays the years of experience of the K-8 administrators who responded to the survey ($n = 216$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Administrators' Years of Experience

Experience	<i>F</i>	%
1-2 Years	22	10.2
3-5 Years	40	18.5
6-10 Years	59	27.3
Over 10 Years	95	44.0
Total	216	100.0

Table 3 presents the highest degree obtained by respondents. The majority of the respondents, 85.1%, report their highest degree obtained is a master's degree ($n = 215$).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Highest Degree Obtained

Degree	<i>F</i>	%
Bachelors	1	0.5
Masters	183	85.1
Doctorate	15	7.0
Other	16	7.4
Total	216	100.0

The following section contains the results of the hypothesis testing. Testing results are supported by descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were calculated by providing the frequency and percentage of K-8 administrators responding to each of the items on the Crisis Preparedness Survey.

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the hypothesis testing to address the five research questions used in this study are discussed in this section. Each research question is followed by the corresponding hypothesis statement. The method used to test each hypothesis and the results of each test are described. A factorial ANOVA was used for RQ2.

RQ1. To what extent do K-8 school administrators perceive they are prepared for a major school crisis?

H1. K-8 school administrators perceive they are prepared for a major school crisis.

Descriptive analysis was conducted to address to what extent K-8 administrators perceive they are prepared for a major school crisis. Survey item 1 addressed how prepared respondents are to handle a major school crisis, using a Likert-type scale. Out of the 214 respondents, 71.5% reported that they are moderately or extremely prepared to handle a major school crisis. Only one respondent (0.5%) reported that they are not prepared. This supports H1. Table 4 presents the degree to which K-8 Kansas administrators perceive they are prepared to handle a major crisis.

Table 4

Perception of Preparedness for a Major School Crisis

Degree	<i>F</i>	%
Not Prepared	1	0.5
Somewhat Prepared	22	10.3
Fairly Prepared	38	17.8
Moderately Prepared	116	54.2
Extremely Prepared	37	17.3
Don't Know	0	0.0

Additional information was obtained on survey item 12, providing respondents an opportunity to reply to an open-ended response to identify what (if anything) they need to feel more prepared for a school crisis. While some respondents expressed that one can never be prepared enough for a crisis, over 25% of the others identified needing more planning, training, preparation, and practice along with continuous discussions in order to be better prepared in the event of a major crisis. One respondent articulated that “we can’t plan for everything, so we have to prepare and react wisely. Confident people make confident choices when they need to be made.” Another respondent expressed “continued new information about what has been successful and what has not. Yearly training is important.”

RQ2. To what extent do K-8 school administrators differ in their perceptions of school-wide preparedness for a major school crisis according to the following demographic variables: school setting, type of school, gender of administrator, years of administrator experience, and highest degree obtained by the administrator?

H2. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness among school settings.

A factorial ANOVA was conducted to address to what extent administrators differ according to demographic variables. The results of the analysis indicated a statistically significant main effect of school setting on crisis preparedness, $F = 4.117$, $df = 2, 154$, $p < .05$. See Table 5 for the mean values for this analysis.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for H2

Setting	<i>M</i>
Urban	2.869
Rural	2.423
Suburban	3.065

A follow-up post hoc was conducted to determine which pairs of means were different. The Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) post hoc was conducted at $\alpha = .05$. The mean difference between the perceptions of principals in Rural versus Suburban schools ($M = -.62$) was significantly different, whereas the mean difference between the perceptions of principals in Urban versus Rural ($M = -.30$) and Urban versus Suburban ($M = -.32$) schools were not. This supports H2. See Table 6 for the results of the post hoc.

Table 6

Post Hoc Results for H2

Setting	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Urban-Rural	.30	.173
Urban-Suburban	-.32	.203
Rural-Suburban	-.62	.000

H3. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness between the types of schools.

The results of the analysis indicated there was not a statistically significant main effect of school type on crisis preparedness, $F = .467$, $df = 1, 154$, $p = .495$. The mean for public schools ($M = 2.829$) was higher than the mean for private schools ($M = 2.667$). Perceived crisis preparedness does not differ between types of schools. This does not support H3.

H4. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness between male and female administrators.

The results of the analysis indicated there was a marginally statistically significant main effect of administrator gender on crisis preparedness, $F = 2.948$, $df = 1, 154$, $p = .088$. The mean for males ($M = 2.791$) was higher than the mean for females ($M = 2.750$). Perceived crisis preparedness does not differ between male and female administrators.

H5. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness among administrators' years of experience.

The results of the analysis indicated there was not a statistically significant main effect of administrators' years of experience on crisis preparedness, $F = .115$, $df = 3, 154$, $p = .951$. See Table 7 for the mean values for this analysis. Perceived crisis preparedness does not differ among administrators' years of experience. This does not support H5.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for H5

Years of Experience	<i>M</i>
1-2 Years	2.530
3-5 Years	2.835
6-10 Years	2.756
Over 10 Years	2.853

H6. There is a difference in perceptions of school preparedness among administrators' highest degrees obtained.

The results of the analysis indicated there was not a statistically significant main effect of administrators' highest degree obtained on crisis preparedness, $F = .194$, $df = 3, 154$, $p = .901$. See Table 8 for the mean values for this analysis. Perceived crisis preparedness does not differ among administrators' highest degrees obtained. This does not support H6.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for H6

Degree	<i>M</i>
Bachelors	3.000
Masters	2.673
Doctorate	2.833
Other	3.056

RQ3. To what extent is collaboration occurring between first responders or other members of the community and K-8 administrators in regards to crisis preparedness?

H7. Collaboration is occurring between first responders or other members of the community and K-8 administrators in regards to crisis preparedness.

A descriptive analysis was conducted to address to what extent collaboration is occurring between the community and K-8 administrators in regards to crisis preparedness. Survey item 9 addressed to what degree their school receives support from the community to meet the needs of crisis preparedness, utilizing a Likert-type scale. Out of the 215 respondents, the majority (70.7%) perceives they have moderate to extreme support from the community to meet the needs of crisis preparedness. This supports H7. Table 9 identifies the degree to which K-8 administrators perceive they have community support in their crisis preparedness efforts.

Table 9

Perception of Community Support

Degree	<i>F</i>	%
No Support	6	2.8
Minimal Support	15	7.0
Some Support	38	17.7
Moderate Support	78	36.3
Extreme Support	74	34.4
Don't Know	4	1.9

Additional information was obtained on survey item 14, providing respondents an opportunity to reply to an open-ended response to identify what collaboration opportunities they have with community members to support their crisis preparedness efforts. Respondents varied in their responses to identifying the collaboration opportunities they have with community members to support their crisis preparedness efforts. Nearly 10% of the administrators who responded to the open-ended survey question noted that they have great collaboration with their community partners, while less than 5% indicated they had little to no collaboration opportunities established. Collaboration opportunities include meetings on a regular basis with law enforcement and emergency personnel as well as local and county agencies in crisis planning or review of current plans in place.

One respondent's answer was "we are pretty fortunate to have a great relationship with local law enforcement entities and emergency services and allow them to do training in our building. It facilitates and fosters a good relationship and gives them an intimate

knowledge of our building and procedures.” Conversely, another said, “I have not yet been afforded any opportunities to collaborate with community members on the plan as it is generated by county officials, not school officials.” Another response indicated that “communication is key for a successful crisis plan. We inform our parents and community of our crisis drills and explain our reasoning for practicing our crisis drills. We want our faculty, staff, and students to seamlessly execute the crisis drill just like a fire or tornado drill.” Finally, another respondent suggested that they “are constantly working with major stakeholders from the community to improve the efforts and expectations for their role during a crisis situation.”

RQ4. To what extent do Kansas K-8 administrators feel prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training that has been made available to them?

H8. K-8 administrators feel prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training that has been made available to them.

Descriptive analysis was conducted to address to what extent Kansas K-8 administrators feel prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training that has been made available to them. Survey item 2 addressed how prepared respondents felt as a result of the crisis preparedness training they have received using a Likert-type scale. An overwhelming 68.4% of the respondents indicated that they are moderately to extremely prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training they had received. Only two respondents indicated they were not prepared as a result of training they had received. Moreover, six respondents indicated they had not received training. This supports H8. Table 10 shows the degree to which administrators perceive they are prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training they have received ($n = 215$).

Table 10

Perception of Preparedness from Crisis Preparedness Training

Degree	<i>F</i>	%
Not Prepared	2	0.9
Somewhat Prepared	22	10.2
Fairly Prepared	38	17.7
Moderately Prepared	104	48.4
Extremely Prepared	43	20.0
Never Received Training	6	2.8

Additionally, descriptive analysis was conducted to determine how important Kansas K-8 administrators perceived it was to attend crisis preparedness training. Survey item 8 asked administrators how important it is to attend crisis preparedness training using a Likert-type scale. Over 73% of the respondents indicated that they perceived attending crisis preparedness training as very important. An additional 23.2% indicated it was fairly to moderately important. No respondents indicated it was not important to attend crisis preparedness training. See Table 11 for the results of this analysis ($n = 216$).

Table 11

Perception of Importance of Attending Crisis Preparedness Training

Degree	<i>F</i>	%
Not Important	0	0.0
Somewhat Important	6	2.8
Fairly Important	9	4.2
Moderately Important	41	19.0
Very Important	159	73.6
Don't Know	1	0.5

Further information was obtained on item 11 in the Crisis Preparedness Survey, allowing respondents to identify what (if any) training they had received for crisis preparedness, in an open-ended response format. Training received varied from active shooter training to mental health, first aid, and training from the state or district level. Specifically, 10% of the respondents identified ALICE training, and an additional 4% of respondents identified they had received training from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) or Homeland Security.

RQ5. To what extent do Kansas K-8 administrators face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans?

H9. K-8 administrators face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans.

Descriptive analysis was conducted to address to what extent Kansas K-8 administrators face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans. Survey item 10 addressed to what degree respondents felt there are barriers in the

implementation of their crisis preparedness plan using a Likert-type scale. Kansas K-8 administrators indicated that they perceive there are barriers to implementing their crisis preparedness plan, with 94.4% indicating they face minimal to moderate barriers. Only eight respondents indicate there are no barriers to the implementation of their crisis preparedness plan. This supports H9. See Table 12 for the degree to which administrators perceive they face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plan ($n = 213$).

Table 12

Perception of Barriers in the Implementation of Crisis Preparedness Plan

Degree	<i>F</i>	%
No Barriers	8	3.8
Minimal Barriers	63	29.6
Some Barriers	88	41.3
Moderate Barriers	50	23.5
Extreme Barriers	4	1.9
No Plan	0	0.0

Additional information was obtained from item 13 on the Crisis Preparedness Survey. Respondents were provided an open-ended question to identify the barriers they face in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plan. The need for additional time and money were identified by 20% of the respondents. Additionally, opportunities to practice, staff reluctance, and building design were identified as barriers by almost 15% of the respondents.

One respondent proposed “the biggest barrier is fighting the will of people to simply get it done. Because it is difficult, or because it deals with a situation most would rather not talk about, few are willing to jump in with both feet and deal with it.” Another suggested that “no amount of planning can fully prepare you for a real crisis because in a crisis situation things do not always go as planned.”

Summary

Presented in chapter four were the results of hypothesis testing for this study. Descriptive analysis was conducted for research questions 1, 3, 4, and 5. Descriptive analysis indicated that 71.5% of Kansas K-8 administrators feel they are moderately to extremely prepared for a major crisis, 70.7% feel support from their community in their crisis preparedness efforts, 68.4% are better prepared a result of the crisis preparedness training they had received. Additionally, 94.4% of administrators surveyed indicated that they face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness planning.

A factorial ANOVA was conducted for research question 2 to address to what extent administrators differ according to demographic variables. Results indicated that there were no differences in school-wide crisis preparedness among school type (public or private), years of administrator experience, highest degree obtained by the administrator, or gender of the administrator. However, the results of the analysis indicated a statistically significant difference among school settings, specifically rural versus suburban schools.

Provided in chapter five is the interpretation of the findings from the current study and offered in the chapter are recommendations for future research. Presented in the chapter is a summary of the study including the overview of the problem, the purpose

statement, research questions, review of methodology, and the major findings of the current study. Discussion of the findings related to the literature follows the study summary. The chapter concludes with implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Recommendations

Presented in chapter four were the results of the data analysis for this study. Provided in chapter five is a summary of the study by restating the overview of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, the methodology, and the major findings of this research. Discussion of the findings related to the literature follows. Chapter five concludes with implications for action, recommendations for future research designed to extend the findings of the study, and concluding remarks.

Study Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of the preparedness level of Kansas elementary and middle school (K-8) administrators in the event of a crisis. Total population sampling was used to identify public and private K-8 administrators to participate in the study. The sample included 216 administrators who responded to a 20-item Crisis Preparedness Survey. Descriptive analyses and hypotheses testing was conducted to test the five research questions that guided the study.

Overview of the problem. Knowing what to do when faced with a crisis can be the difference between calm and chaos, between courage and fear, between life and death (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). School and district personnel need to be ready to handle crises to keep children and staff out of harm's way and ready to learn and teach.

An increased prevalence of violence in American schools in recent history has shaken the complacency of school districts about the need for effective crisis management plans to be revisited. Examination of what school districts are doing to be prepared for crisis situations and provide insight into the biggest challenges that leaders

face is critical to ensure that schools are safe and secure for students and staff members. Analyzing the preparedness of schools in light of the unfortunate events that have happened brings to the forefront the need to have leaders in place prepared to address crisis situations that may arise. Needs of schools as well as the populations they serve are varied, but the fact remains that having a crisis management plan in place allows for the priority to remain at all times on safety and security in schools.

Purpose statement and research questions. The primary purpose of this study was to explore the status of crisis management in schools as perceived by K-8 administrators in the state of Kansas. A secondary purpose of this study was to analyze the perceived readiness levels of administrators and schools to respond to crisis situations and identify to what extent collaboration is occurring between community members and school administrators. Furthermore, a purpose of this study was to explore training opportunities that have been made available to administrators, and analyze to what extent administrators face barriers in the implementation of effective crisis preparedness plans. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

RQ1. To what extent do K-8 school administrators perceive they are prepared for a major school crisis?

RQ2. To what extent do K-8 administrators differ in their perceptions of school-wide preparedness for a major school crisis according to the following demographic variables: school setting, type of school, gender of administrator, years of administrator experience, and highest degree obtained by the administrator?

RQ3. To what extent is collaboration occurring between first responders or other members of the community and administrators in regards to crisis preparedness?

RQ4. To what extent do K-8 administrators feel prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training that has been made available to assist them?

RQ5. To what extent do K-8 administrators face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans?

Review of the methodology. Utilized in this study was a quantitative research design employing survey methods with descriptive analysis. The population for this study included public and private K-8 school administrators in the state of Kansas. Total population sampling was used in this study. The 20-item Crisis Preparedness Survey was used to examine the perceptions of elementary and middle school (K-8) principals regarding crisis preparedness in schools. The sample included the 216 K-8 administrators who completed the Crisis Preparedness survey online using Google Docs. Survey data were input into IBM® SPSS® Faculty Pack 23 for Windows for analysis. Descriptive analysis was used in this study as well as a factorial ANOVA to address to what extent administrators differ in school-wide crisis preparedness according to demographic variables.

Major findings. Results related to the research questions revealed that overall K-8 administrators in Kansas perceive they are moderately prepared for a major school crisis. Additionally, respondents indicated that more planning, training, and practice as well as continuous discussions would help them be better prepared in the event of a major crisis.

Secondly, investigated in this study was the extent to which K-8 administrators differ in their perceptions of school-wide preparedness according to demographic variables. School setting was the only variable with a discrepancy in administrator

perception. School type, administrator gender, administrator years of experience, and highest degree obtained did not have an effect on administrator perception of school-wide crisis preparedness.

Examined in this study was the extent to which collaboration is occurring between community members and K-8 administrators. Participants overwhelmingly perceived that they have support from the community in regards to crisis preparedness.

Administrators indicated that collaboration opportunities include meetings on a regular basis with law enforcement and emergency personnel as well as local and county agencies in crisis planning aid in this collaboration.

Also studied was the extent to which administrators feel prepared as a result of training opportunities that have been made available to them. Again, administrators indicated that they are more prepared as a result of the crisis preparedness training they had received. However, there was inconsistency in the identification of the types of training administrators had received.

Finally, barriers Kansas K-8 administrators face in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans was explored. Administrators indicated they perceive that there are barriers to implementing their crisis preparedness plans. Identified barriers included time, money, and resources. Additionally, staff reluctance and building design were also identified as barriers.

Findings Related to the Literature

Examination of this study's findings as they relate to the literature on crisis preparedness in schools are included in this section. The results of the current study indicated that over 70% of K-8 administrators in Kansas perceive they are moderately to

extremely prepared in the event of a major school crisis. This is consistent with the findings from Werner's (2007) study of Missouri counselor preparedness in the event of a major crisis, where 69% of the counselors perceived they were moderately to extremely prepared (Werner, 2007). Additionally, respondents were asked to provide information regarding what they would need to feel more prepared for a major school crisis. K-8 administrators in Kansas reported in over 25% of the responses, that they need more planning, training, preparation and practice as well as ongoing communication in order to be more prepared in the event of a major crisis situation. This is lower than the counselors in Werner's (2007) study, which indicated that 45.8% of respondents specifically identified practice and training. However, in both the current study and in Werner's (2007) study, counselors in Missouri and K-8 administrators in Kansas perceive that it is difficult to prepare for something such as a major crisis that cannot be predicted.

Research question two addressed Kansas K-8 administrators' perceptions of school-wide preparedness for major school crisis according to demographic variables. Results of the current study indicated that school setting was the only variable with a discrepancy in administrator perception. Almost 67% of K-8 Kansas administrators perceive their school is moderately to extremely prepared to respond to a major school crisis. This is higher than the 58.4% of counselors in Werner's (2007) study who felt their school was moderately to extremely prepared. This difference could be attributed to the greater focus and more training that has occurred in schools in recent years. Additionally, the role of a counselor is different than that of a school administrator, so their perceptions may be different. School type, administrator gender, administrator years of experience, and highest degree obtained did not have an effect on administrator

perception of school-wide crisis preparedness. The mean difference between the perceptions of principals in rural versus suburban schools was significantly different. This could be attributed to the amount and types of resources available to schools in suburban schools might be different than those of rural schools. Additionally, 59.3% of respondents indicated their school is in a rural setting, while only 25.2% indicated their school is in a suburban setting. Further research would need to be conducted to determine specific factors that attribute to this significant difference.

Collaboration between first responders or other members of the community and Kansas K-8 administrators was addressed in research question three. The majority (70.7%) of respondents in the current study indicated they have moderate to extreme support in their crisis preparedness efforts. Previous research supports the importance of having community support in advance of any crisis situation. First, by Richtig and Hornak (2003), suggesting the importance of developing a positive working relationship with community agencies such as law enforcement, fire departments, and the media. This was echoed by Gainey (2009) in suggesting that it is important for schools to “build relationships with key stakeholders and a positive reputation in the community” (p. 273). The current research suggests that K-8 administrators in Kansas have made strides in gaining community support in a variety of ways in their crisis preparedness efforts.

The extent that Kansas K-8 administrators feel prepared as a result of crisis preparedness training that had been made available to them was addressed in research question four. Over 68% of the respondents in the current study indicated they are moderately to extremely prepared as a result of the crisis preparedness training they had received. Additionally, respondents were asked to identify what types of training they

had received for crisis preparedness. While responses varied, 10% of respondents indicated they had received ALICE training. As previously discussed, ALICE training teaches participants the crisis preparedness principles to alert, run, fight, or given the situation, go to a traditional lockdown (Montgomery, 2015). This is consistent with MacNeil and Topping (2007) that supports the assumption that those who are involved in crisis preparedness in schools are used to making decisions, therefore they have training and experience in making “effective decisions while under stress and in unpredictable situations where there may be limited information, time, and resources” (p. 87). However, expertise from other areas such as police, fire, and emergency personnel where these situations may be more familiar can help inform training programs for school personnel. How to best facilitate this training, and more conclusive evidence of the most effective training to support school administrators requires further research.

Research question five addressed the extent that administrators face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans. Over 94% of Kansas K-8 administrators indicated they experience minimal to moderate barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans. The need for additional time and money were identified by respondents in 20% of the responses. Additionally, opportunities to practice, staff reluctance, and building design were identified as barriers by almost 15% of the respondents in the current study. These were consistent with the challenges Gainey (2009) identified in her research of school districts in South Carolina. Specifically, Gainey (2009) suggested that lack of time, personnel, and financial resources for adequate crisis management and training were most frequently cited by respondents in addition to the need for communication with both internal and external

audiences. Conversely, one respondent in the current study suggested that they “don’t believe there are intentional barriers, but still no one believes that a crisis will happen in our building, so disbelief is a barrier.” Furthermore, one respondent suggested that “no amount of planning can fully prepare you for a real crisis because in a crisis situation things do not always go as planned.”

Conclusions

Provided by this study was an analysis of crisis preparedness in schools for meeting new and continuing challenges in order to safely educate students as perceived by current K-8 administrators in the state of Kansas. Preparing for a crisis can be an endless endeavor, but school administrators are faced with responding to crises and improving school safety as a critical component of fulfilling the mission of learning at school. Explored in this study was Kansas K-8 administrators’ perceived preparedness in the event of a major school crisis individually and at the school level, recognized collaboration opportunities that is occurring, explored crisis preparedness training opportunities that have been made available, and identified perceived barriers that administrators face in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans. Conclusions drawn from the current study are provided in this section. Implications for action and recommendations for further research follow.

Implications for action. Threats to education continue to emerge including financial, environmental, and safety concerns. Now is not the time for schools to adopt a passive approach to crisis management, but rather educational leaders must ensure schools are ready to meet new and continuing challenges to successfully educate children (Gainey, 2009). Effective crisis management planning cannot prevent crises from

occurring, but can reduce the damage and possibly save lives. Developing an adequate level of preparedness in schools is critical to ensuring the safety of students, staff, visitors, and the general public because critical to educating and preparing our children to achieve their highest potential is maintaining safe, orderly, and welcoming learning environments.

Being prepared for a crisis situation is critical to any school community. It is important for administrators to have the necessary tools to ensure their schools are safe. As indicated by the results of this study, administrators in Kansas feel prepared in the event of a crisis situation, but the amount and type of training they have received varies. Recent school tragedies have demonstrated the need for all school personnel to be “properly trained, specifically empowered and practiced in making independent decisions to implement a lockdown, evacuation or sheltering for severe weather without being instructed by anyone to do so” (Dorn et al., 2013, p. 16). All school staff should be trained on how to respond under stress, and perhaps more importantly, school staff should be trained to act.

In addition, administrators face barriers in the implementation of their crisis preparedness plans. Based on the results of this study, administrators would benefit from being provided with more consistent training opportunities, and afforded opportunities to address the barriers they face in order to be more adequately prepared in the event of a major crisis. Care should be taken and time allocated for training of all staff members because they would need to assume the role of first responder in the event of a school crisis. It can be difficult to prepare for crisis situations in schools because many educators have the feeling that it could not happen in their schools. This can lead to

resistance to change, or a lack of awareness that it is a serious concern. In some cases simply teaching empowerment of educators to do what is necessary to keep everyone safe. While there is no way to prepare for each and every scenario that could happen, it is critical to make the best judgment for the sake of the safety of everyone. Overcoming such obstacles requires school leaders to “recognize that crisis preparedness is not an option, but an imperative; crisis planning does not compete with schools’ education mission, but rather supports it; and genuine crisis response capacity builds ongoing prevention efforts and engagement” (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 10).

Recommendations for future research. After examining the major findings of this study and understanding the implications for action, recommendations can be made regarding further research. Suggestions for future research would include:

1. Replicate the current study utilizing high school (9-12) administrators in Kansas to determine consistent trends in crisis preparedness K-12 in the state.
2. Replicate the current study with K-8 administrators from other states to compare preparedness opportunities and determine national trends and best practices.
3. Modify the study to include K-8 teachers’ perceptions regarding crisis preparedness and planning at the classroom and building level.
4. Conduct a study regarding the perceptions parents have as related to the crisis preparedness of their child’s school.
5. Replicate the study with other staff members responsible for crisis preparedness and response, such as counselors and nurses to gain insight into the perception of all staff members that might be involved with a major crisis.

6. Examine the relationship between training, experience, and identified barriers of K-8 administrators for overall crisis preparedness and effectiveness.
7. Examine school crisis preparedness plans for content, quality, and overall effectiveness against specific identified criteria related to best practice.
8. Conduct a study on the effects of specific crisis preparedness training programs on the preparedness level of administrators and teachers.
9. Conduct a study on the perceptions of the local law enforcement agencies perceived level of preparedness of their local schools.

Concluding remarks. The results of the current study contributed to the body of work related to crisis preparedness in schools, specifically K-8 administrators in the state of Kansas as they strive to meet new and continuing challenges in order to safely educate students. Findings from the study indicated that while the majority of administrators perceive they are prepared for a crisis and have benefited from the crisis preparedness training they have received, there is clearly a lack of consistency among administrators as to the type of training that has been received. Additionally, K-8 administrators are committed to crisis preparedness in schools, but face significant barriers in the implementation of their plans.

The current research on crisis preparedness in schools is just the beginning. With perceptions identified, investigation into determining adequate training needs for all staff members as well as a means for breaking down barriers that schools face will serve to benefit administrators in ensuring they are ready to meet the new and ongoing challenges they face to adequately and safely educate students today and in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Permission Correspondence

Danilea Werner <dww0004@auburn.edu>

Tue 3/17/2015 3:15 PM

Inbox

To:Stephanie J Hill <StephanieJHill@stu.bakeru.edu>; dwerner@auburn.edu <dwnerner@auburn.edu>;

Stephanie,

Congratulations on pursuing your degree. It is an accomplishment to get to the dissertation stage. I am honored you would like to use the questions outlined below in your research. Please feel free to use them. I would be interested to read your findings once you have completed your research.

Good luck and hang in there!

Dr. Danilea Werner

From: Stephanie J Hill [mailto:StephanieJHill@stu.bakeru.edu]

Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2015 2:48 PM

To: dwerner@auburn.edu

Subject: Crisis Preparedness Survey

Dear Dr. Werner,

My name is Stephanie Hill and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Baker University in Overland Park, Kansas. I am proposing research in Crisis Preparedness, specifically as it relates to elementary school administrators. As you indicated in your recommendations for future research, I am proposing to replicate your study, with modifications, to gain insight into the perceptions of elementary administrators in the state of Kansas on their preparedness level and training in the event of a crisis. I am interested in obtaining your permission to utilize the questions you used in your survey. Specifically, I would like permission to utilize questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 20, 22, and 24. I will provide you with full credit for the questions.

Thank you in advance for your time and favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hill
Baker University
Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership
stephaniejhill@stu.bakeru.edu

Appendix B: Crisis Preparedness Survey

School Crisis Preparedness Survey

1. How prepared are you to handle a major school crisis?
 Not Prepared Somewhat Prepared Fairly Prepared
 Moderately Prepared Extremely Prepared Don't Know

2. How prepared do you feel as a result of the crisis preparedness training you have received?
 Not Prepared Somewhat Prepared Fairly Prepared
 Moderately Prepared Extremely Prepared Never Received Training

3. How prepared are you to implement your school crisis plan if necessary?
 Not Prepared Somewhat Prepared Fairly Prepared
 Moderately Prepared Extremely Prepared No Crisis Plan

4. How prepared do you feel your school is to respond to a major school crisis?
 Not Prepared Somewhat Prepared Fairly Prepared
 Moderately Prepared Extremely Prepared Don't Know

5. To what degree have you been involved in the creation of the school crisis plan?
 Not Involved Minimally Involved Fairly Involved
 Moderately Involved Very Involved No Crisis Plan

6. To what extent do you agree your school's crisis plan is comprehensive?
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 No Crisis Plan

7. How important do you feel it is to prepare for a major school crisis?
 Not Important Somewhat Important Fairly important
 Moderately Important Very Important Don't Know

8. How important is it to attend crisis preparedness training?
 Not Important Somewhat Important Fairly important
 Moderately Important Very Important Don't Know

9. To what degree does your school receive support from the community to meet the needs of crisis preparedness?

No Support Minimal Support Some Support Moderate Support
 Extreme Support Don't Know

10. To what degree do you feel there are barriers in the implementation of your crisis preparedness plan?

No Barriers Minimal Barriers Some Barriers Moderate Barriers
 Extreme Barriers No Plan

11. What (if any) types of training have you received for crisis preparedness?

12. What (if anything) do you need to feel more prepared in a school crisis?

13. What barriers do you face in the creation and implementation of your crisis preparedness plan?

14. What collaboration opportunities do you have with community members to support your crisis preparedness efforts?

15. In what setting is your school located?

Urban Rural Suburban

16. What type of institution is your school?

Public Private

17. What is the approximate current enrollment of students in this school?

18. How many years of experience do you have as an administrator?

Less than a Year 1-2 Years 3-5 Years 6-10 Years Over 10 Years

19. What is your highest degree obtained?

Bachelors Masters Doctorate Other

20. What is your gender?

Male Female

Appendix C: Baker University IRB Proposal for Research Form



Date: June 4, 2015

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
GRADUATE DEPARTMENTIRB PROTOCOL NUMBER _____
(IRB USE ONLY)

IRB REQUEST
Proposal for Research
Submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board

I. Research Investigator(s) (Students must list faculty sponsor first)**Department(s)** **School of Education Graduate Department**

Name	Signature	
1. Gary George, Ed.D	_____	Major Advisor
2. Katie Hole, Ph.D	_____	Research Analyst
3. Verneda Edwards, Ed.D	_____	University Committee Member
4. Kathleen O'Hara, Ph.D		External Committee Member

Principal Investigator: Stephanie Hill

Phone: (913) 579-6483

Email: stephaniejhill@stu.bakeru.edu

Mailing address: 12119 Hayes St.

Overland Park, KS 66213

Faculty sponsor: Dr. Gary George

Phone: 913-764-1951

Email: garygeorge@fac.bakeru.edu

Expected Category of Review: ___Exempt ___ Expedited ___Full**II: Protocol: (Type the title of your study)**

An Analysis of School Crisis Preparedness in Kansas

Summary

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

School safety is an increasing concern as school violence is a growing problem in America's schools. The purpose of this research is to explore the status of crisis management in elementary schools in the state of Kansas by analyzing their readiness level to respond to serious crisis situations.

Briefly describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.

There are no conditions or manipulations in this study.

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy. Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

This study will utilize a quantitative research design employing survey methods. The 20-item survey will be administered through a web-based questionnaire that will determine the perceptions of elementary administrators on their level of preparedness for a school crisis situation. The study will investigate administrator perceptions on their level of preparedness in the event of a crisis situation, explore perceived barriers faced by administrators in implementing effective crisis management plans, and identify opportunities of collaboration efforts that exist with first responders or other community members in crisis preparedness. The survey that will be used in this study is attached.

There are no psychological, social, physical, or legal risks involved in this study.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

There will be no stress to subjects involved in this study.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

Subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way in this study.

Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

There will not be a request for personal or sensitive information as part of this study. However, subjects involved in this study will be asked to provide some demographic information. This information includes: school setting (urban, rural, suburban),

institution type (public/private), total enrollment, years of administrative experience, highest degree obtained, and gender. Information obtained in this study will not be used to identify individual participants.

Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

Subjects will not be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading as part of this study.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Time commitment to the participant will be approximately 15 minutes in order to complete the survey.

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

The population for this study will be elementary administrators. The sample will include public and private school elementary principals in the state of Kansas. Subjects will be selected to be part of this study if their school is a public or private accredited elementary school located in Kansas. Selection will be based on the 2014-2015 Educational Directory from the Kansas State Department of Education. Subjects will be contacted through email correspondence.

The written solicitation sample is attached.

What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

There will be no inducements offered to subjects for their participation in this study. Participation will be voluntary as indicated on the survey stating that permission to participate is implied by completing the survey.

How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

Consenting to be part of study is implied when subjects complete the survey. This will be stated on the introductory letter sent to subjects with a link to the electronic survey; therefore, there is no need for a written consent form to be used.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

There will not be any permanent record of the data made that can be identified with any subject who participates in the study.

Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.

There will be no permanent record that will be made available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer to indicate the fact that a subject did or did not participate in this study.

What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with it after the study is completed?

To ensure confidentiality of data obtained in this study, individual names will not be recorded. Any identifying information will be reviewed by the researcher and data will be stored electronically and password protected. Data will be kept for three years after completion of this study and then destroyed.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no risks involved in the study to either the subjects or society.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

Archival data will not be used in this study. The researcher will be creating her own file of data based on responses to the survey.

Appendix D: Baker University IRB Approval to Conduct Research Letter



Baker University Institutional Review Board

July 6, 2015

Dear Stephanie Hill and Dr. George,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at CTodden@BakerU.edu or 785.594.8440.

Sincerely,

Chris Todden EdD
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Verneda Edwards EdD
Sara Crump PhD
Erin Morris PhD
Scott Crenshaw

Appendix E: Recruitment Correspondence

Participant Recruitment Email #1

Dear School Administrator:

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Baker University doctoral candidate, Stephanie Hill. The purpose of this study is to analyze the readiness level of K-8 schools in Kansas to respond to a serious crisis situation as perceived by current principals.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a web-based survey. The total time will be approximately 10-15 minutes.

Participation in full, or in part, of the survey is completely voluntary with the option of not answering any question or discontinuing participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. By clicking on the link below, you are implying your agreement to participate in this study.

Your participation will contribute to a greater understanding of how prepared Kansas elementary school principals perceive their school to be in the event of a crisis. In addition, the results will help determine how Kansas administrators receive crisis intervention training and provide valuable information for future crisis resource and training development.

Please note: I see no risk to participants, beyond the potential for emotional discomfort caused by reflecting on potential crisis events. The results will be confidential, as no identification will be requested. Your responses will be combined with other responses and reported in summary format by the researcher conducting the study.

As an administrator myself, I know your time is valuable and in high demand. I truly appreciate your willingness to help.

Link to survey:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Az7ZGhsIMCz26af3htZzRYNq2grP5H4rCPKUwv657K4/viewform?usp=send_form

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hill
stephaniejhill@stu.bakeru.edu

Participant Recruitment Email #2

Dear School Administrator:

You recently received an invitation to participate in a research study conducted by Baker University doctoral candidate Stephanie Hill. If you have already responded to the survey, THANK YOU and please disregard this email. If you have not, I would greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete the survey. The purpose of this study is to analyze the readiness level of elementary and middle (K-8) schools in Kansas to respond to a serious crisis situation as perceived by current principals.

Participation in full, or in part, of the survey is completely voluntary with the option of not answering any question or discontinuing participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. By clicking on the link below, you are implying your agreement to participate in this study.

Your participation will contribute to a greater understanding of how prepared Kansas school principals perceive their school to be in the event of a crisis. In addition, the results will help determine how Kansas administrators receive crisis intervention training and provide valuable information for future crisis resource and training development.

Please note: I see no risk to participants, beyond the potential for emotional discomfort caused by reflecting on potential crisis events. The results will be confidential, as no personal identification will be requested. Your responses will be combined with other responses and reported in summary format by the researcher conducting the study.

As an administrator myself, I know your time is extremely valuable and in high demand, especially at the beginning of the new school year. I truly appreciate your willingness to help!

Link to survey:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Az7ZGhsIMCz26af3htZzRYNq2grP5H4rCPKUwv657K4/viewform?usp=send_form

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hill
stephaniejhill@stu.bakeru.edu

Participant Recruitment Email #3

Dear School Administrator:

You recently received an invitation to participate in a research study examining the readiness level of elementary and middle schools in Kansas to respond to a serious crisis situation. If you have completed the survey, THANK YOU and please disregard this email. If you have not, I would appreciate you taking the time to do so. The survey will close on Wednesday, August 26 at 5:00 p.m. You will receive no further emails regarding this study.

Participation in full, or in part, of the survey is completely voluntary with the option of not answering any question or discontinuing participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. By clicking on the link below, you are implying your agreement to participate in this study.

Please note: I see no risk to participants, beyond the potential for emotional discomfort caused by reflecting on potential crisis events. The results will be confidential, as no personal identification will be requested. Your responses will be combined with other responses and reported in summary format by the researcher conducting the study.

As an administrator myself, I know your time is extremely valuable and in high demand, especially at the beginning of a new school year. I truly appreciate your willingness to help!

Link to survey:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Az7ZGhsIMCz26af3htZzRYNq2grP5H4rCPKUwv657K4/viewform?usp=send_form

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hill
stephaniejhil@stu.bakeru.edu