BEST PRACTICES IN STUDENT SAFETY

1. **Ensure High Quality and Safe Facilities and Infrastructure.**
   a. Employ environmental design techniques to maximize safety (enclosed playgrounds, protected outdoor spaces, secure entry points, **limited visual access by non-school personnel**).
   b. Control and limit access to school facilities (secure vestibule, locked entry points).
   c. Integrate interior and exterior video monitoring systems.
   d. Control digital access through technology firewalls and device management systems.
   e. Integrate visitor management and background check systems for all visitors.
   f. Integrated reinforced window systems (bullet-resistant).
   g. Integrated panic buttons in key areas.
   h. **Establish and practice crisis/emergency prevention, preparedness, and response protocols.**
      i. Establish internal and external staff and parent/guardian communication systems.
   j. Ensure physical spaces, security features, and emergency plans are regularly inspected and assessed to identify potential supervision issues, and other factors that might afford the opportunities for injury or for someone to isolate a child and potentially cause harm. Inclusion of first responders and professional experts in the review process is highly recommended.

2. **Establish Appropriate Student Supervision.**
   a. Acceptable levels are based on the age of the students, environment, and type of activity:
      i. **Classroom**
         1. Average Illinois class size: Elementary 21 (2018); 23.5 (2011)
      ii. **Playgrounds**
         1. Each play area uniquely determines the amount of supervision needed.
         2. Supervisors should be able to visual and vocal control of the play area.
         3. The typical adult-to-child ratio is between 40:1 to 80:1.
         4. Delineate the availability of supervision before and after school.
      iii. **Cafeteria/Commons Areas**
         1. The typical adult-to-child ratio is 50:1.
      iv. **Restrooms/Locker Rooms**
         1. Bathrooms should be separated and clearly marked for adult or for student use.
         2. Staff may enter a student restroom when suspect danger to self/others/property.
   b. Off-campus trip protocols, including those with overnight stays and parent chaperones, should be reviewed for appropriate processes and trainings to minimize risks.

3. **Promote Expectations and Provide Training and Support for Appropriate Student Behavior.**
   a. Create and sustain a positive school climate
      i. Character education and social emotional learning programs and activities.
      ii. Regular assessment of school climate by staff, students, and parents.
   b. Actively train and promote appropriate social behavior in school environment and while using electronic media.
   c. Implement policies and practices that clearly delineate behavioral expectations in a given environment (classroom, hallway, locker room, restrooms, playground).
      i. Document expectations in the student handbook.
ii. Regular monitoring and enforcement of expectations.

iii. Implement appropriate disciplinary action when needed.

d. Implement multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) that encompass prevention, wellness promotion, and interventions that increase with intensity based on student need.

4. **Promote Expectations and Provide Training for Appropriate Adult Behavior.**

   a. Delineate expectations for professional boundaries between students and adults.

   b. Strive to keep student interactions with adults “interruptible and observable.”

      i. Within hearing or visual range of another adult and/or other students:

      ii. Open doors and/or window treatments in classrooms and offices.

         1. Situations requiring a high degree of confidentiality may require special accommodation or adaptation (counseling sessions, medical examinations).

   c. Establish policies and procedures addressing contact with students outside of school for non-school activities and events (babysitting, tutoring, coaching).

      i. Parental permission and school notification should be in place for out-of-school contact.

   d. Limit staff-student communication to school-operated email platforms and applications.

   e. Provide regular training for staff on appropriate and inappropriate contact and interactions with students and colleagues, and how and when to report suspected misconduct.

   f. Provide regular training about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for parents, family members, and others who volunteer in the school and interact with or oversee students in an unsupervised setting.

5. **Create and Maintain an Internal Reporting, Recording, and Tracking Systems.**

   a. Maintain commitment to respond to all suspected and/or reported cases of abuse/misconduct.

   b. Implement an internal operating protocol that addresses how reports of misconduct will be handled, including anonymous or confidential reporting.

   c. Document investigations of expressed concerns and review reports for concerning patterns.

   d. Explicitly forbid retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports suspicions or violations.

   e. Regularly review plans and reporting protocols and amend them as necessary.

6. **Conduct Rigorous Review for Potential New Employees.**

   a. Screen prospective employees including criminal history and background checks that take into account where the applicant has lived.

      i. Financial Background, Social Media Background

   b. Conduct interview and reference-checking procedures that specifically seek information about an applicant’s past and current behavior in interactions with youth.

   c. Confirm that references are provided by representatives of the earlier employer who are knowledgeable about the prospective employee, including why he or she left the previous position, and who have the authority to provide the reference requested on behalf of the school or other entity for whom the applicant worked.

*Balance physical and psychological safety to avoid overly restrictive measures (e.g., armed guards and metal detectors) that can undermine the learning environment and instead combine reasonable physical security measures (e.g., locked doors and monitored public spaces) with efforts to enhance school climate, build trusting relationships, and encourage students and adults to report potential threats. (National Association of School Psychologists)*