AN INTRODUCTION TO A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS

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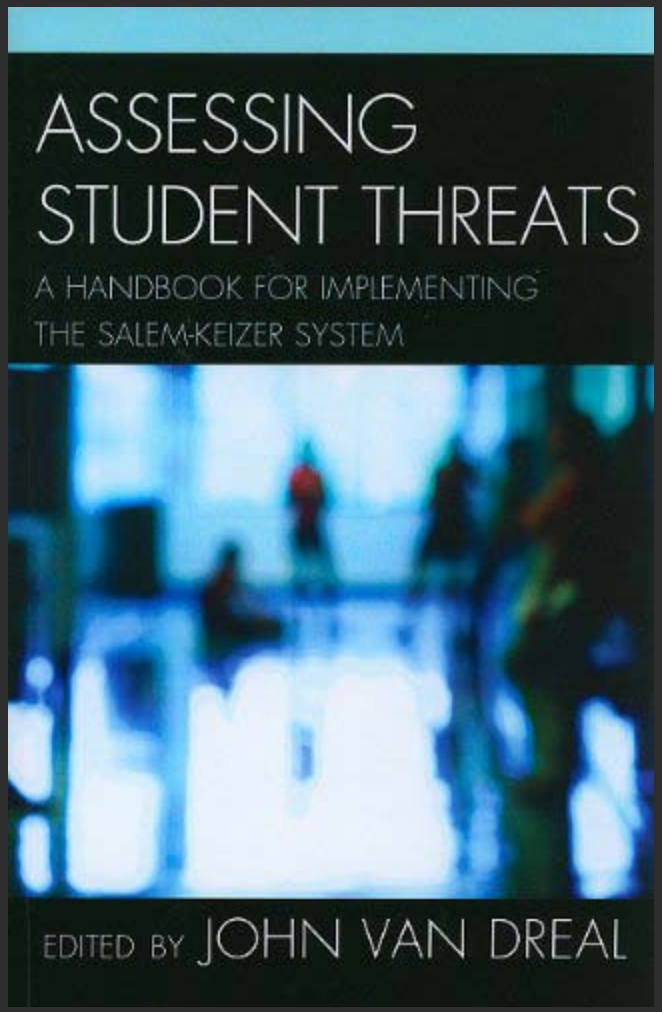
Website
http://www.studentthreatassessment.org



***Assessing Student Threats: A Handbook for Implementing the Salem-Keizer System*.**

Edited by John Van Dreal

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COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING
October 15-17, 2013
Willamette University

- Youth and adult threat assessment
- Campus security
- Domestic violence
- Protocols, templates, process guides
- Implementation of system

Website

http://www.willamette.edu/events/tat/

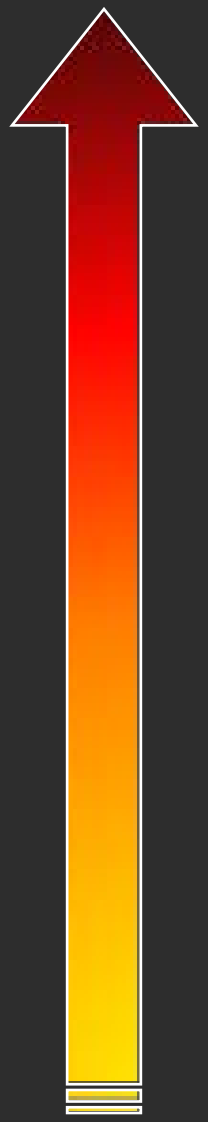
AGGRESSION CONTINUUM
(from Eric M. Johnson, PhD.)

Bombing
Shooting
Raping
Beating
Stabbing
Strangulation

(Violent Aggression: serious or lethal injury)

Sexual coercion
Fighting
Hitting with objects
Throwing objects
Slugging
Kicking
Scratching
Biting
Slapping
Pushing

(Aggression Behavior: low to moderate injury)



COMPARE HUMAN HISTORY TO ONE CALENDAR YEAR. START JANUARY 1

(First… 200 Million Years: Hominids)

180 Thousand Years: Modern man (Homo sapiens) =
1 year, January 1 through December 31

60 Thousand Years ago: Out of Africa =
Late August.

9 Thousand Years ago: Written History =
Mid October.

3 Hundred Years ago: Science and Enlightenment =
2:26 pm, December 31

1 Hundred Years ago: Industry and Technology =
7:15 pm, December 31

WHAT IS THREAT ASSESSMENT?

As defined by the Secret Service (*Threat Assessment in Schools* pg. 29): "The primary purpose of a threat assessment is to prevent targeted violence. The threat assessment process is centered upon analysis of the facts and evidence of behavior in a given situation. The appraisal of risk in a threat assessment focuses on actions, communications, and specific circumstances that might suggest that an individual intends to mount an attack and is engaged in planning or preparing for that event."

In other words, it is the assessment of the "unique" interaction and dynamics between the perpetrator, the target and the situation they share. The question is "does the student 'pose' a threat," not "did the student 'make' a threat."

We do not do:

- **Predictive Profiling.**
- **Enhanced Professional Judgment**
- **Artificial Intuition**
- **Future Predictions**
- **Labels**

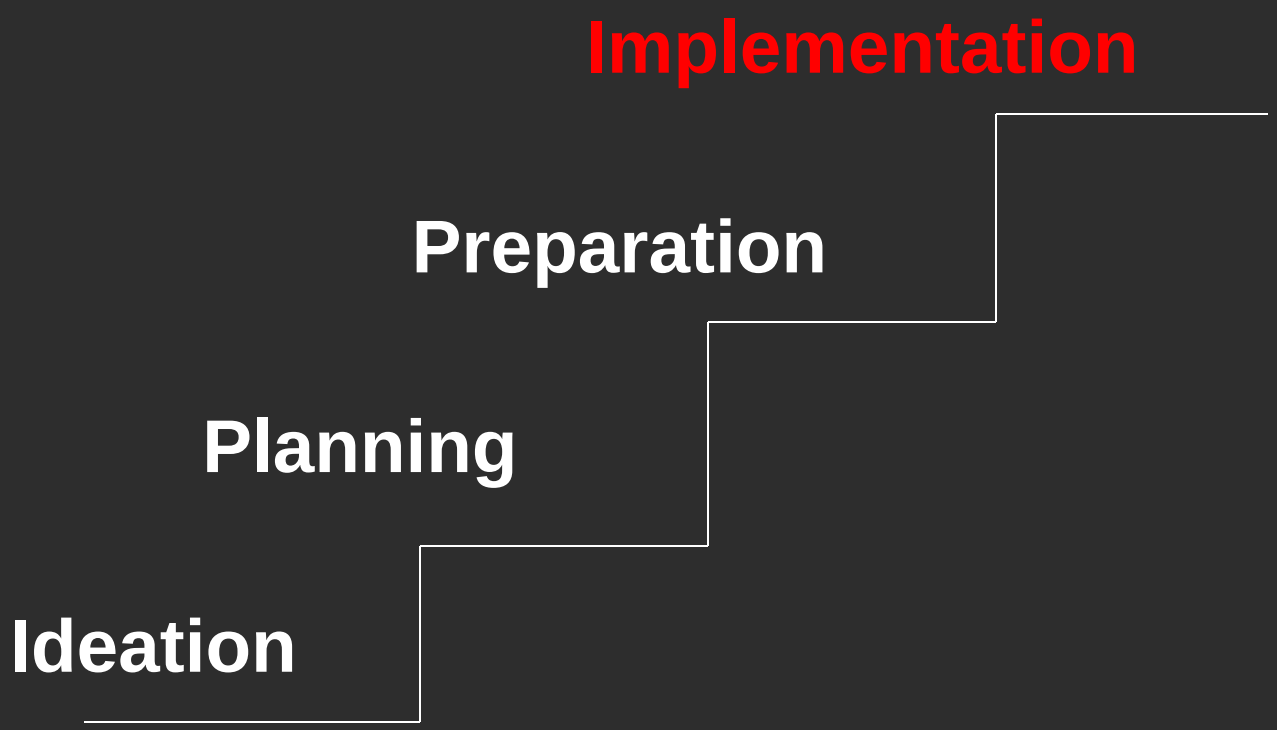
TARGETED AND REACTIVE VIOLENCE

- **REACTIVE / AFFECTIVE**
  violence or aggression?

- **TARGETED / PREDATORY**
  violence or aggression?

Pinker, 2011

Targeted Violence Type (process)



RESEARCH SUMMARY

1. What kind of communication has the student made regarding their intention to harm others? Is the communication a statement of anger such as “I’m going to kill you…” or does it involve details of planning or an ongoing consideration of an attack?

2. Is there a motive? Does the student experience or perceive severe rejection of bullying from other students?

3. Are there indications of behavior that increase the possibility of violence occurring (plan, acquiring weapons, rehearsal or simulation, other preparations, scheduling)?

4. Is there a specific target?

5. Is there peer collaboration? Are peers aware of or concerned about a potential attack?

6. Does the situation involve student/students who are out of alternatives, marginalized and disenfranchised, low on psychological reserves, out of acceptable coping strategies, and willing to accept the consequences of carrying out the threat?

7. Are there personality or behavioral traits, family dynamics, School system issues or social dynamics that lead to a more vulnerable and potentially escalating situation.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THREAT ASSESSMENT

- **Pay attention to intuition, but focus on facts.**
- **Focus on behavior, not profile traits.**
- **Review all factors as they exist within context.**
- **Examine behavioral progress, changes, and movement into the targeting continuum.**
- **Confirm information, confirm impressions.**
- **Address all investigative questions regarding risk.**
- **Focus on prevention and inhibitors, not prediction.**
- **Remember the goal… identify risk, decrease that risk and improve the psychological safety and learning environment.**

Violence or Aggression? Targeted or Reactive?

- Vindictive
- Bullying
- Disturbed Youth
- Gang
- Relationship, Stalking
- Rampage Shooting

SCHOOL CLIMATE

1. Assess the emotional climate. Promote listening and paying attention.

2. Adopt a strong, but caring position against the “code of silence.”

3. Implement systems to prevent and intervene in bullying.

4. Involve all members of the school community in creating a safe and respectful school culture.

5. Foster and develop trusting relationships between each student and at least one adult at school.

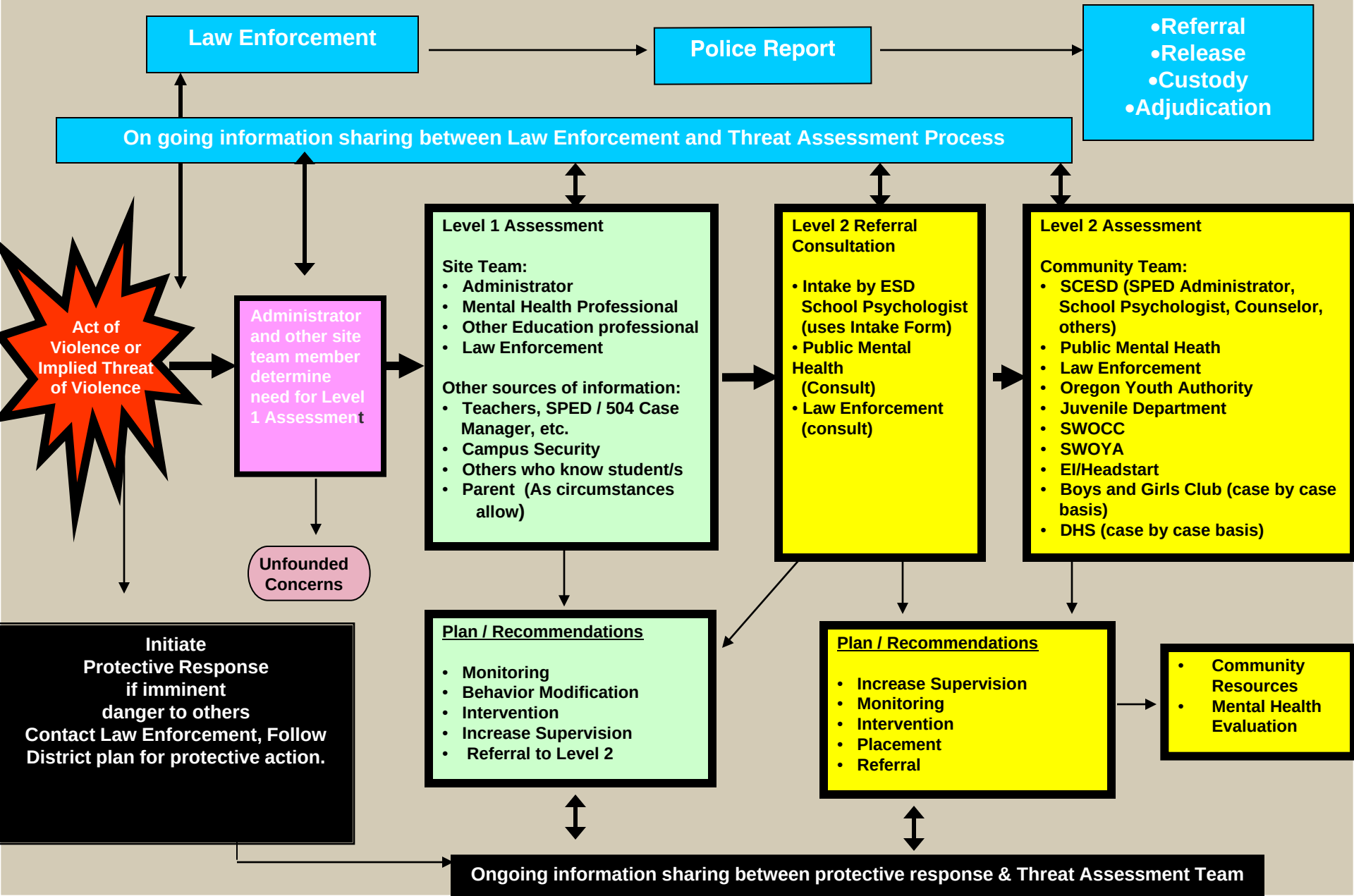
6. Create mechanisms for sustaining a safe school climate (such as a system that assesses and manages potential violence.)

JUSTIFICATIONS

1. Concerns regarding violence and school safety.
2. Response to Oregon House Bill 3444 and Senate Bill 344 (now ORS 339.250).
3. Zero-Tolerance Policy and expulsion. Reactive measures.
4. Psychological Safety.

SOUTH COAST STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT and MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Systems Flow Chart



Organizing a system

- Need, justification and authorization.
- Community ownership, commitment, and responsibility.
- Policy and procedures necessary for functioning. (Legal counsel)
- Organize resources, design system and refine.
- Training, implementation, more training.
- Maintenance of program, trouble-shooting and ongoing training.

Choosing Team Members
(Modified from US Dept of Ed. and USSS)

- An ability to relate well to others.
- An awareness and sensitivity to the difference between harming and helping in an intervention.
- A reputation for fairness and trustworthiness.
- A questioning, analytical and even skeptical mindset.
- Training in the collection and evaluation of information from multiple sources.
- Discretion and an appreciation for the importance of keeping information confidential.
- Familiarity with the contemporary issues of school and community safety.
- The ability to serve as a formal link or liaison between various systems (a “boundary spanner”, a “team player” who believes in the project and the process.)
- In-depth knowledge about their own organization, resource availability, and both political and ethical boundaries.
- Full credibility and respect within their own organization.

94% of administrators stated that:

- STAT effectively identified potentially dangerous students and situations.
- STAT had positive effects on school safety.
- STAT provided important information necessary for support, discipline, and placement decisions.
- STAT fulfills a valuable role in schools.

In the same survey, 90% of administrators reported that STAT increased efficient coordination with law enforcement and mental health.