

# School Preparedness Now

## Safer Schools For a Better Tomorrow Initiative

The goal is to increase district-level preparedness to improve continuity of learning for PreK-12 schools and minimize impact of school-related disruptions and emergencies.

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We're on the Web!  
See us at:

[www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/task/](http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/task/)

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*School Preparedness Now* is a newsletter that provides New Jersey school districts with relevant, up-to-date, and practical information on safety & preparedness for schools and local communities.

For more information contact the K-12 School Security Task Force at [ssbt@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:ssbt@doe.state.nj.us).

## NJ In the News: DOE Receives Federal Grant

As part of [President Obama's "Now is the Time" plan](#) to make our schools safer, the president proposed four competitive grant areas, including School Emergency Management grants totalling over \$13 million.

The Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning (OSPEP) submitted an application to the US DOE for the federal grant on July 7, 2014. OSPEP proposed three main areas to expand New Jersey's capacity to provide technical

assistance and close the gap in LEA's ability to plan, prepare, respond, and recover from emergencies. The grant award aimed to further OSPEP's goal to establish safe and secure environments for K-12 school communities and continue the work established by the K-12 School Security Task Force initiative entitled, [Safer Schools for a Better Tomorrow](#). The proposal targeted three main areas:

- Increase capacity to train and provide technical assistance.

- Coordinate joint trainings for schools and law enforcement
- Develop a State Safety Plan Model Template as a resource.

The competitive grant was awarded to 25 states. The award was announced September 23, 2014. New Jersey received funds in the amount of \$732,350.

For More Information about the grant contact [Ben Castillo](#), Director of OSPEP.

## Hot Topics: Developing a Plan Template: Good or Bad?

For some time, the Department of Education has weighed the option of developing a school safety & security plan template for schools. While most schools in New Jersey for some time had a written emergency plan, the content within the plans varied. On August 4, 2011, after several years at the table collaborating with various state and local agencies, the Department released the *School Safety & Security Plan: Minimum Requirements* which provided schools with a

list of items and assessments that each district had to include in their safety plan. The framework was helpful in creating a standard benchmark for schools in New Jersey. However a random anecdotal sampling of districts indicates further support is needed to close the gap in how districts develop quality, written plans. Most experts will tell you [it's not the plan itself but the process](#) of developing the plan that is so valuable, thus the Department is moving

forward with creating a model template to guide schools and their partners. More and more schools, parents, police, and other stakeholders are sitting at the table together and conversing about school safety. The template is a welcome resource to act as a repository of the information, resources, and decisions generated during the planning conversations.

*\*Monies from the federal grant award are allocated to the development of this state-wide tool.*

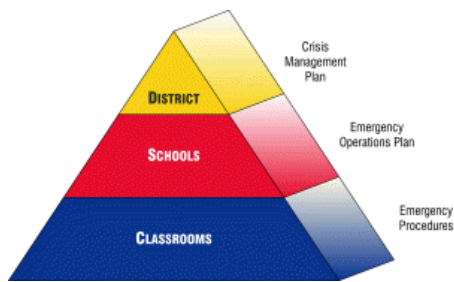
## Promising Practices: Developing an EOP Resources for New Jersey Schools



In New Jersey, our schools have several resources to help develop a high quality emergency operations plan (EOP). The EOP may adopt many names such as security plan, emergency management plan, safety plan, etc. No matter the nomenclature, a district’s plan in New Jersey must contain at least the [minimum requirements](#) stipulated by administrative code N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1. The state’s Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning (OSPEP) is working jointly with local, county, and federal agencies to tap into the various resources available to our schools to ensure plans are comprehensive, effective, and compliant. These resources are not stand alone tools; rather they are complementary resources that strengthen how schools plan in a coordinated and collaborative way. The State Resource Matrix below illustrates the value of each resource and provides a guide for how to identify which resource(s) may best suit the school’s current planning level.

### STATE RESOURCE MATRIX

Resource	Agency	Purpose	Ideal for ...
Developing High Quality School EOP	<a href="#">REMS TA Center</a>	Provides a framework for developing a comprehensive plan.	Schools with no or very basic plans.
School Safety & Security Plan: Minimum Requirements	NJ DOE’s <a href="#">OSPEP</a>	Lists the minimum items all schools must include in their plans.	Schools with plans that require guidance to ensure state compliance.
Multi-Hazard Planning for Schools (FEMA)	<a href="#">NJ State Police OEM</a>	Coordinates and engages stakeholders around the “table” to identify local specific responses to a variety of threats.	Schools with plans that seek help to increase stakeholder engagement.
Basic School Resource Officer Training	<a href="#">NJASRO</a>	Trains local and state police working in schools that will assume three roles: law enforcement, educator, and mentor.	Schools that have or are considering hiring school resource officers.
<a href="#">Site Assessment Visit Tool</a>  *Username & Password access necessary	County Prosecutor’s Office  *Contact your local prosecutor’s office	Provides a profile of physical building level vulnerabilities.	Schools that seek to identify physical building areas in need of improvement.



**Note:** It is important that districts and schools understand how these resources complement each other to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize time and resources to ensure a safe and secure learning environment for every school community, regardless of zip code.

## A Special Message from the Director of the Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning

Hello. My name is Ben Castillo. I am the director of the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJ DOE) Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning (OSPEP). Prior to joining the NJ DOE, I served with the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) for over 25 years. For many of those years, I was assigned as an academy instructor. In that role, I learned the importance of how policies and procedures guide performance in the field. Training played a key role in bridging the gap between the objectives of written policies and the accomplishment of vital tasks. Likewise, in the school setting, it is important for school administrators, staff and students to understand the intended goals of safety plans. A school security drill, an important training tool, provides opportunities to ensure that all understand their roles and responsibilities. As noted in FEMA's *All Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guide*, knowing who will do what, when, with what resources, and by what authority – before, during, and after an emergency – is crucial.

In the 10 years following my state police career, I was employed by Ocean County as an assistant professor and dean of the School of Social Science and Human Services. Since education is a subdivision within the Government Facilities Sector of Homeland Security's critical infrastructure, my experience in successfully establishing New Jersey's first community college degree program in homeland security provided me a clear understanding of some of the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by education facilities.

As I transitioned into the role of director of OSPEP, I carried with me the important lessons learned in the NJSP and as an educator. OSPEP's charge is to prepare our schools to respond to any threat by developing comprehensive plans and conducting monthly drills to test those plans. Since my start at the department in August 2014, my focus has been clear: to direct all program initiatives to build the capacity of our schools and plan effectively to respond to all hazards. To date, OSPEP continues to focus its efforts on training and drill observations. We are here to assist schools' efforts around safety. Overall, OSPEP's regional planners respond to requests for technical assistance from New Jersey's nearly 600 school districts, almost 100 charter schools, and over 1200 non-public schools.



Moving forward, OSPEP will bolster its programmatic focus with the monies awarded by the US Department of Education to strategically enhance the ability of our schools to develop high-quality plans that meet New Jersey's requirements for school safety and security plans and provide practical tools to school administrators to train them how to test plans and support their staff during emergencies.

The task to ensure that our schools continue to be safe havens for staff and students requires a holistic approach. The Department clearly understands the connection between academic outcomes and safe school environments. Thus, OSPEP works closely with several partners to achieve these goals, including the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, the county prosecutors and other county and local agencies.

Keeping our schools safe requires your commitment and engagement, as well. We count on your expertise in working with the schools to raise the safety and preparedness bar for all of New Jersey's educational institutions. Don't hesitate to share with us what your staff and students are doing to promote a positive culture and climate to reduce incidents of violence and other school threats. I am committed to keeping an open dialogue of school preparedness and welcome your ideas. I invite you to reach out to me or any of the [regional planners](#) with questions or comments regarding your school's preparedness efforts.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Castillo".

Ben Castillo, Director

## Significant Incidents that Make an Impact on NJ School Policies

### April 14-15, 2014 Bring Back Our Girls

On the night of April 14-15, 2014, over 300 school girls were kidnapped from a secondary school in Nigeria. In this attack, Boko Haram terrorists entered the government school disguised as Nigerian military. The school was targeted due to its Western teachings.



### December 16, 2014 Peshawar School Attack

In an attack by the Taliban at a military-run school in Pakistan, 145 were killed, and many more wounded. Reports state the militants wore police uniform as they entered the school occupied by about 500 students and teachers and began shooting. Hostages were held in the auditorium. One wounded student reports nobody knew what was going on when the violence erupted.

**Note:** International incidents may have significant impacts on our schools. For instance, if your school or community has a large population of residents with ties to the affected country, it may be helpful to have conversations with staff and students about a specific current event, and ensure resources, including mental health services, are available.

#### AT-A-GLANCE: Comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan (EOPs)

An Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is a document that clearly identifies how to respond to an incident. The document assigns specific actions to specific individuals to be carried out during an emergency; coordinates how these actions will be achieved across organizations; describes how people and property will be protected; and identifies resources (personnel, equipment, supplies, etc.) for use during the emergency. A Federal [Guide for Developing High Quality EOPs](#) was released in June 2013.

In New Jersey, public and charter schools must develop plans in accordance to the [LEA Minimum Requirements for School Safety & Security Plans](#) (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1). Districts must include and/or assess at least 91 items that make up the requirements. This document is a best practice for non-public schools.

## Did You Know? NJ Facts

**3** – The number of states that border New Jersey. *Note: It is important to plan for mutual aid during large scale incidents. Be in the know regarding procedures of responding agencies from neighboring areas.*

**118** – The number of public, charter, or non-public schools in State Police jurisdiction.

**1224** – The number of [non-public schools](#) in New Jersey registered with the Department. The NJ DOE classifies a school as non-public if it offers education for grades K-12 in compliance with state and federal laws.

**314** – The number of public libraries in the state.

**127** – The number of miles New Jersey borders on the Atlantic



**Academic success cannot be achieved if students do not have a safe learning environment. Research has proven students who are fearful do not learn well.**

For this reason, New Jersey is one of the most aggressive states when it comes to protecting our nation's most vulnerable population – **OUR CHILDREN**. New Jersey is serious about providing a top-notch education for all children in all communities *regardless of zip code*.



# Prepárate Ahora: ¿Como Se Dice?

During the summer of 2011, NJ DOE hosted an 8-week course for state stakeholders on **Spanish as a Second Language** as part of the Planning for the Next Pandemic grant received to look at ways continuity of education could occur during emergencies. New Jersey recognizes the importance of linguistic and cultural competence in planning and implementing resources, as well as communicating and delivering messages across various mediums. In response to this growing need to better communicate across diverse populations, New Jersey is targeting key stakeholders that are integral during emergency planning, including state officials, law enforcement, administrators, and education personnel to enhance our state's linguistic competency. In this spirit, this newsletter will feature a Spanish Language Vocabulary Section.

## Asignar Funciones

-- Assign Roles

## Equipo de Planificación

--Planning Team

## Junta

--Meeting

## Plan de Operaciones de Emergencia

--Emergency Operations Plan

## Amenazas

--Threats

## Entrenamiento

--Training

## Lista de Seguridad

--Security/Safety Checklist

## Plantilla del Plan Modelo

--Model Plan Template

## Desarrollar Objetivos

--Develop Objectives

## Evaluacion

--Assessments

## Peligros

--Hazards

## Recursos

--Resources



## Your District in the Spotlight: **East Orange School District**

The East Orange School District's (EOSD) mantra, *Rising to a Standard of Excellence*, does not only personify the district's academic expectations, but also their high expectation for safety & preparedness. Under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Gloria Scott, Michelle Murchison, the district's Safety Coordinator, has taken a strong position on ensuring EOSD staff are properly trained and equipped to handle any school related incident. The EOSD considers the safety of its students and staff a high priority and safe school environments fundamental to student achievement. As such the district is committed to providing the support, resources, and training necessary to implement and maintain a comprehensive all-hazards approach to school safety. The district participated in the [NJ DOE's Making Our Schools Safe \(M.O.S.S.\) program](#) in 2012-2013. Participation in the M.O.S.S. process identified the need for additional safety related professional development for staff. Dr. Scott took the recommendations set forth in the M.O.S.S. Report and aptly made corrective actions a priority moving forward. Since September 2014, the district has partnered with the US Department of Education's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center to provide several trainings for district staff and community partners with presentations from experts in the field from around the country. These trainings have ranged from Threat Assessments to Resiliency Strategies for Educators. EOSD leadership understands that the keys to safety are professional development, practice, communication, evaluation, and commitment to allocate time and resources to support safe schools. **We applaud EOSD and their unwavering dedication to healthy, safe schools.**



# NEXT ISSUE

## Highlights



Want to be featured in our next issue? Have a topic you want us to address?

Send us comments, promising practices, featured school districts, or an incident you have dealt with to:

[ssbt@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:ssbt@doe.state.nj.us)

✓ **K-12 School Security Task Force Update**  
✚ **Upcoming: March 2015 Report**

✓ **Next Steps of Safer Schools for a Better Tomorrow Initiative**

**New Jersey Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness Expands Outreach Initiative.** Over 1 in 5 New Jersey residents don't speak English. New Jersey Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness is expanding its outreach to provide these residents with information on how to report suspicious activities by offering awareness materials in 9 diverse languages. Raise awareness in your schools by locating a poster on your wall.

- ▶ Arabic
- ▶ Chinese (Mandarin)
- ▶ English
- ▶ Hindi
- ▶ Filipino (Tagalog)
- ▶ Korean
- ▶ Portuguese
- ▶ Punjabi
- ▶ Spanish



For posters, contact Jeffrey Gold at [jeffrey.gold@ohsp.state.nj.us](mailto:jeffrey.gold@ohsp.state.nj.us).  
For Tri-folds, contact Craig Sante at [craig.sante@ohsp.state.nj.us](mailto:craig.sante@ohsp.state.nj.us).

### ***About ... The K-12 School Security Task Force***

Established in 2006, the mission of The Governor's K-12 School Security Task Force is to further enhance the safety and security of New Jersey's public and nonpublic school students and, to the extent possible, develop standard benchmarks for education and law enforcement officials to help maintain consistency in school security protocols across a wide variety of safety and security challenges.

