

Safety: Dealing with the capacity to inflict harm

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parents of schoolchildren is a reality that must be confronted today: prepare for the worst.

"I don't remember all the things I worried about in fourth grade, but getting shot

at school was not one of them," Rogozinski said.

"After being inviting and doing everything to connect with families in one era — you could drop kids off by walking into the building -- now, once our

buses have departed and kids are inside, the exterior doors are locked. At the grade school and middle school, we have perimeter fencing; it's not like a fortress, but you can't casually breach it."

It's a delicate balance, he admits. There must be practice drills, but they shouldn't be the cause of trauma.

"Situations that occur like in Texas, in Newtown, every one of them is unique," Rogozinski said. "There were a lot of safety protocols in place, school resource officers, they had run drills very recently and yet, for whatever reason, the capacity to inflict harm outweighed the ability to prevent it."

WHAT'S CHANGED

- *Training.* Warrenton police officers have attended active-shooter training and explored scenarios at various schools in Clatsop County, including one at Warrenton High School and another at the Coast Guard base.

"We have been able to deliver the ALICE training to Warrenton school staff," Chief Workman said. ALICE, which evolved after the 1999 Columbine shootings, stands for alert, lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate. Instead of corralling students into a classroom and hiding, it encourages the use of option-based, proactive survival strategies.

Officer Aaron Berndt is a certified ALICE instructor and has provided the training to police, school and city employees.

Educational service districts in the Portland area and on the North Coast met with county schools two months ago for "robust" safety training, Rogozinski said. More training is scheduled this summer on handling crises and responses.

A safety specialist also will visit the district this summer to make an analysis of the district's strengths and weaknesses.

Next school year, the district plans to bring in a trainer for age-appropriate and sensitive safety training for students.

- *Cooperation.* The idea isn't new. Together we stand and divided we fall so jurisdiction means little.

"Any type of active shooter in

the county would be responded to by all Clatsop County law enforcement agencies," Workman said. "We train that during an active shooter incident to only wait for backup if they are only minutes away, otherwise you enter to stop the shooter."

Judgment is important, of course; a single officer who's first to respond to a scene with five shooters probably should wait for backup.

"The bottom line is that my officers and I are prepared to enter a situation and stop an active shooter with no backup if the circumstances supported that," Workman said.

- *Structural improvements.* The \$38.5 million bond measure passed in November 2018 paid for the new middle school, but also for safety enhancements at every campus.

A fortified entry cubical was added to Warrenton Grade School and a public address system installed. All campuses received automatic door locks and specialized key systems.

In the police department, all officers have been given more equipment to engage with violent offenders and active shooters.

"Officers all have a patrol rifle and the vehicles all have smaller ballistic shields that the officers can take with them during shooter situations," Workman said. "The department also has a larger shield that can be deployed as well."

- *Vigilance.* The school district has emphasized forming close relationships with students, parents and the community. No concerns are minimized, Rogozinski said.

"When we go to the airport, can we joke about having an explosive on us," he asked. "We need the same standard for schools."

The Warrenton-Hammond School District added the "Safe Oregon" button prominently on its website. Through the state-sponsored tip line, students, parents and community members can report safety concerns anonymously.

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