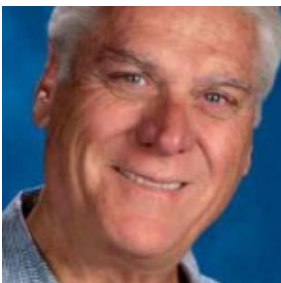


# Opinion: LTUSD takes steps to be more safe

By Jim Tarwater

Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen in our schools, it is important to understand the difference between the possibility of something happening and probability that it will affect you, our school community.

For years, schools have worked closely with law enforcement and other public agencies to ensure we are maintaining the safest learning environments possible. Campus visits have been conducted by law enforcement agencies so they become familiar with a school campus before an emergency and/or disaster occurs.



Jim Tarwater

Districts provide school maps and emergency contact information in an online forum which can be accessed by law enforcement prior to arriving on scene. Our goal continues to be to plan up front so that we are as effective as possible during an emergency.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District has retained the services of a security consultant to develop a unique approach that goes above and beyond the status quo to reduce the probability of an incident of school violence in our community.

Safe schools require broad-based efforts on the part of the entire community, including educators, students, parents, and law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the district has reached out to all local law enforcement leaders in the Lake Tahoe Basin to identify and address key components for improving safety and security in our schools.

As part of these efforts, comprehensive school site visits involving local representatives of the South Lake Tahoe Police and Fire departments, California Highway Patrol, Lake Valley Fire Department, FBI, and El Dorado County Sheriff's Office have been taking place weekly over the past two months.

The focus of these gatherings has been to identify and prioritize facility systems, structures, and technology improvements that will elevate the level of safety and security and reduce the probability of a violent incident occurring in our schools.

Additional stakeholders include teachers, staff members, and students who have been playing an active role in this districtwide effort. These teams have also taken on responsibility for reviewing and improving each school's Safe Schools Plan and for scheduling interdepartmental (police, school, fire, and rescue) practice response exercises and staff training.

Open communication between home and school is critical to the safety and well-being of our students and your children. Let us know if you have a concern or question about school policies or your child's safety. Know if your child's friends have access to guns. Keep any guns in your house locked up and away from children of all ages.

Preventing school violence isn't something that should be left to the schools, the police and the government when there is so much that we all can do together. See what you can do and start making schools safer today.

*Jim Tarwater is superintendent of Lake Tahoe Unified School District.*