

**The Bill Blackwood
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**Basic Crime Prevention
for School Environments**

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**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

This study provided information that school districts lose thousands of dollars every year due to theft. Knowing that theft does occur, the research question is: Can basic crime prevention techniques be implemented to reduce theft rates and save school districts monies?

The problem with theft rates at schools is that the State of Texas is in the midst of an educational funding budget crisis. Schools have to ask tax payers to raise school taxes in order to keep funding for education. If the schools are required to replace stolen property this increases the budget. It was learned that school districts have some type of crime preventions for the school and teachers.

However in researching the data these practices were not implemented. If these policies had been implemented then the school district would have saved money and the police departments would have saved man-hours resulting in saved money.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to prove that by implementing basic crime prevention techniques to students, school teachers, school administrators, and support staff the school district could save the tax payers money by preventing thefts from the school district. This research will be conducted by the author's knowledge of his school district and by contacting various school districts and school district police departments. A survey will also be used to collect data on this growing problem. The research will also consist of reviewing various books, magazines, and articles on the Internet.

The intended outcome will show that most school districts use some type of theft prevention in their districts. Also that these theft prevention techniques are the easiest to use but most often forgotten to be implemented. If used properly and consistently the theft rates for the school districts would decrease. Thus saving the school districts the taxpayer's money without having to replace the stolen items.

Simple methods of basic theft or crime prevention would save man-hours not only for the school district police departments but also for those municipal and county law enforcement agencies that are required to respond and attempt to solve these crimes. Saved man-hours also equate to saved money for the police departments.

School districts all over Texas are facing a grim financial problem. With tax bases being at an all time high and funds being allocated for educational programs, schools cannot afford to be victims of crime. Replacing items that have been stolen add to the cost of budget for the districts. Items typically stolen from school districts are very expensive. VCR's, computers, televisions, digital cameras, and other equipment are

expensive to replace. Moreover, not only are the school districts victims but teachers and students are affected as well.

Crime costs everybody in the community. Can basic crime prevention techniques be implemented to reduce theft rates and save school districts monies? Basic crime prevention techniques can lower thefts in school districts. Basic crime prevention techniques can also save the school districts millions of tax dollars every year.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Everyday millions of students, teachers, and support staff head to schools with the thought that all will be safe. The fact is that theft is a growing concern among school districts all over the nation. Due the budget crisis in education, schools are being more conscience of the growing problem of theft. The majority of all campus crime is theft. According to U.S. Department of Justice and Education, 64% of all crime in schools is theft (Law and Order 2002).

Students aged 12-18 are more likely to victims of theft at school then away from school. In 2001, these students reported that 1.2 million cases of theft occurred at school and about 913,000 occurred away from school. Teachers reported 817,000 thefts at school during the same year (NCES 2003).

The main key to the prevention of property loss is "Target Hardening". Target hardening is defined as the process by which physical protective devices, internal management controls, and the careful deployment of security personnel are combined and coordinated in such a manner as to make the objectives of the criminal more difficult to achieve (Blauvelt 1999). Target hardening has these following objectives:

1. To prevent the crime from occurring;
2. To make the criminal's task so difficult as to his objective less desirable;
3. To slow the criminal down, thus increasing his chances of being apprehended;
4. To give warning of illegal activities;
5. To remove from sight objects of value;
6. To develop a security awareness on the part of administrators, teachers, and students.

Target hardening of the building can be done in many different ways depending on the resources the district has to be used. Target hardening of the building will enhance the protection of both school property and the personal property of those who use the school (Vestermarck 1978). The easiest and most basic prevention is the use of locked doors. One must inspect all exterior doors and locks to make sure they are in properly working order (Blauvelt 1978). Locking doors are the primary defense to keep intruders out of the school if used properly. Keep the doors locked. Windows need to be checked often. If the windows are broken replace them. The replacing of broken windows are cheaper than the purchase of new equipment.

Most schools have terrible key control (Trump 1998). When keys are issued have each recipient sign for the key received. Blauvelt also recommends that a key check should be administered periodically to ensure that all recipients have their own keys. If the keys are not protected then the doors cannot protect and then access to the school can be obtained.

Most schools have far too many access points. Not only do the schools have too many doors but also many of these doors are left unlocked and the school is open to

outsiders. Convenience is the main concern when limiting access is addressed. Not to the parents and visitors but to the staff. Most teachers want easy access to their classrooms from their vehicles. Keeping all doors locked will restrict access to the building. Doors should have signs posted on all exterior doors directing visitors to the main entrance where entry can be gained.

Schools contain a substantial amount of equipment that is used by many people. The schools need to inventory the equipment to reduce the possibility that the items are lost or misplaced. Have the inventory done often not just once or twice a year when assigning and returning the equipment at the beginning and ending of the school year. When the inventory is done have the inventory sheet signed and dated. This will help the police to when the item was last seen and used in the event the item is lost or stolen. When receiving a shipment of equipment and supplies check the contents before signing. If you just count the packages and sign for them, the carrier is blameless if the equipment is short or not there. As well as inventorying the equipment the district should inscribe their name somewhere on the property. This will help in notification of the item is found somewhere else then the school.

Security needs to be overlapping. Overlapping security measures provides a series of stopgaps or backup features that are designed to intervene automatically if the primary security measure fails to intercept a threat or if it is somehow circumvented (Henderson 2001). Many schools use some type of overlapping security. The three main types of overlapping security according to Henderson is the use of personnel, procedural, and physical.

Personnel security factors include security training for teachers and staff. Such training consists of locking classrooms, monitoring hallways, and greeting non-students

in the hallway to provide assistance and directions. Many school districts employ security guards and campus police officers. The mere physical appearance of police or security on campus can detour criminals.

Procedural applications include school district security policies and procedures. Each district should have some type of written policy for teacher and student security policies and practices. Physical security measures include key control, barriers, intrusion detection devices, access control systems, closed circuit television, and badge or id systems. Schools use the overlapping system without being taught this system. When a teacher locks the classroom door and then the custodian sets the burglar alarm they have just overlapped the security system.

These are some simple examples of basic crime prevention for the districts employees and students. There are many other types of crime prevention techniques that can be addressed but cost is a major factor in these types of techniques. Each of the references that were used all concluded that target hardening is the most important key to school security for the school, the teacher, and for the student.

METHODOLOGY

Can basic crime prevention techniques be applied to school districts to lower theft rates? To answer this question a statewide survey was conducted. The survey examined campuses of different sizes and geographical locations throughout the state of Texas. The campuses surveyed ranged from large 5-A schools too much smaller 1-A schools. The findings to this survey were that all school districts have some type of crime prevention in place.

While checking the results of the questionnaires it was found that school security has changed for two specific reasons. The first being the school shootings in Columbine, Colorado and the other is the terrorist attack on the United States. Schools have concentrated on active shooter and terrorist type of security and have become more leisurely on the theft prevention.

The survey was given to teachers, administrators and students. This type of survey differed greatly among the participants. A telephone survey was also conducted for the school districts that have school district police departments.

FINDINGS

Twenty-five school districts were surveyed and the following results were obtained. Theft is the highest crime reported in all the school districts. This crime rate includes theft from students, teachers, and the school itself. Most of the theft was in the range of misdemeanor offense code.

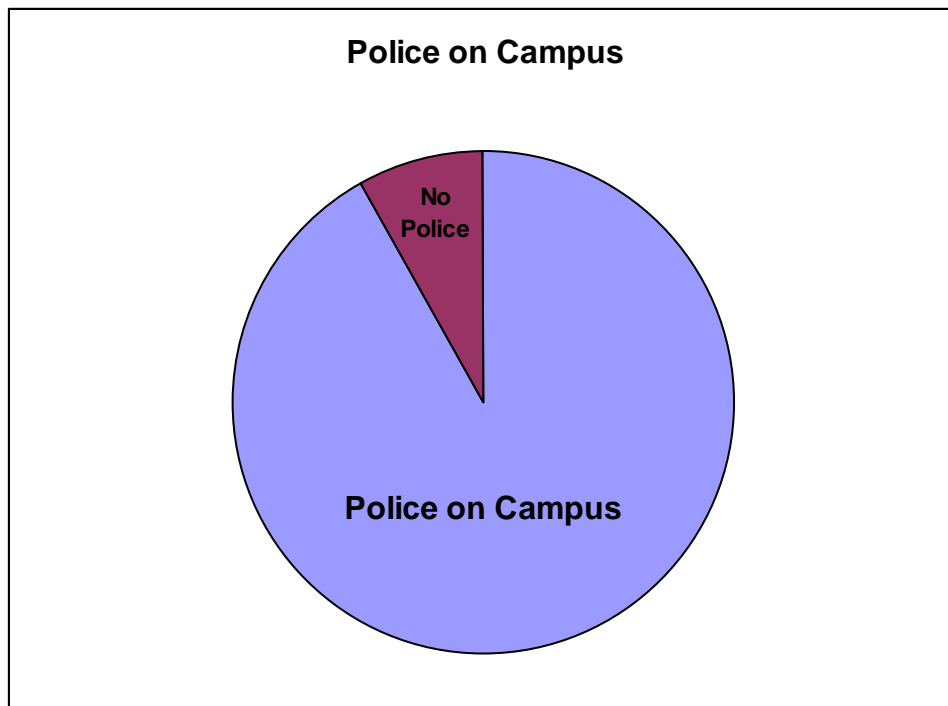
All twenty-five schools stated that theft is a problem in their school districts. Each of the districts reported that only a small percentage of the actual theft was reported to the police. And in the instances that it was reported large dollar amounts were stolen.

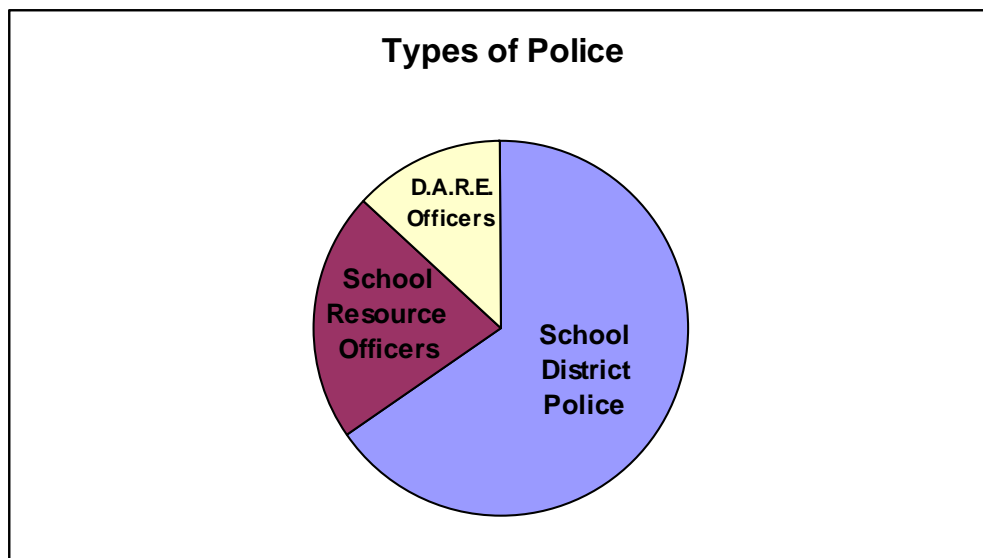
Twenty of the responding school districts stated that their school is monitored by alarm systems. The alarms were installed to lower insurance costs as well as to provide protection to the school. The five schools that did not have alarm systems cited the fact "they are rural" and the cost to install alarms is greater than the loss of property.

All twenty-five schools stated that "lost or stolen property" is a way of replacing outdated equipment through insurance without using outlay capital. The school districts can save money by reporting lost or stolen articles to insurance companies. Since

technology is moving at such a fast pace, the reported stolen or lost items are often out of date. These items will then be replaced and upgraded from the money collected from the insurance companies. This saves the school district from purchasing updated equipment and warehousing the out dated items.

Twenty-three of the schools stated that police officers are on the campus at least one day a week during the school year. Fifteen of these schools stated that they employed their own school district police departments. These departments ranged from one officer to thirty officers. Five of these school districts stated they have School Resource Officers. These are local officers assigned to the school district. The three remaining districts stated they have D.A.R.E. officers. D.A.R.E. officers are local officers assigned to the school to promote drug awareness through education. Their main responsibility is to teach students educational ways to be drug free.

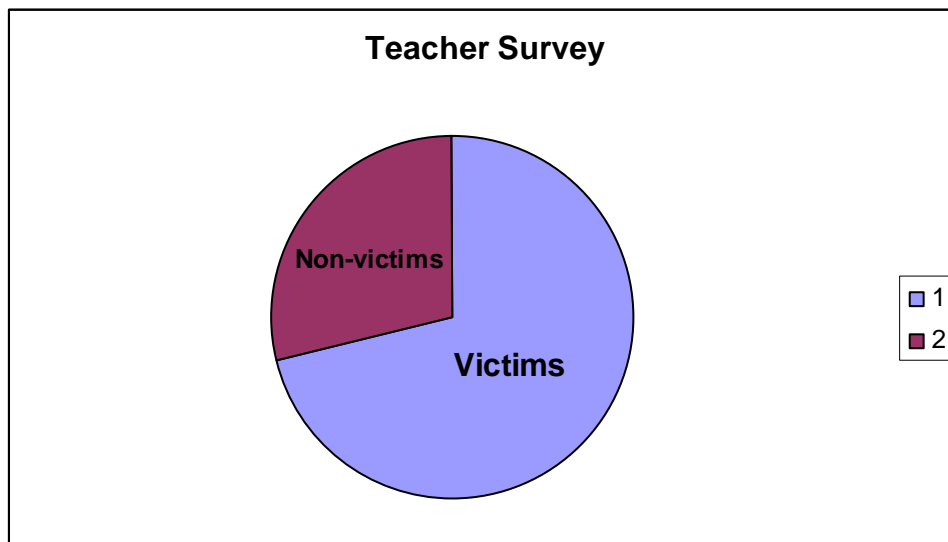




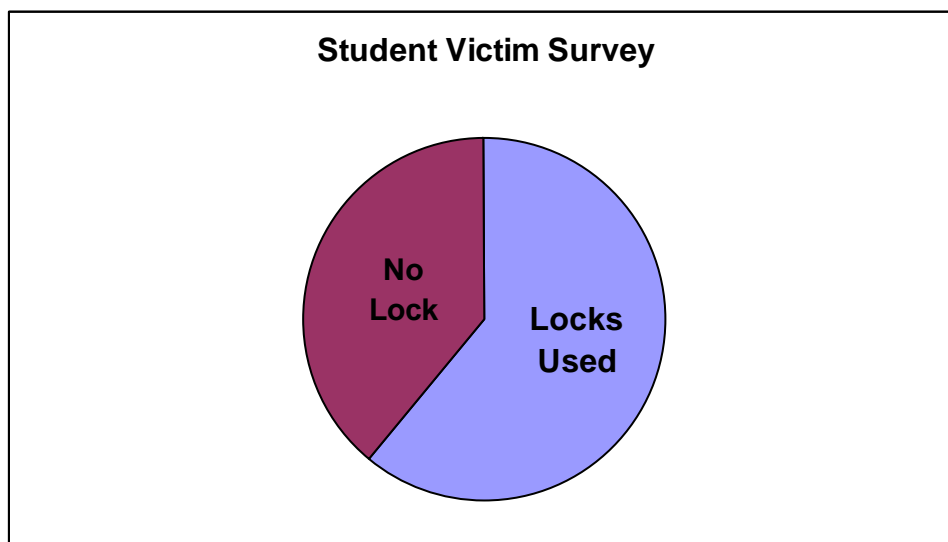
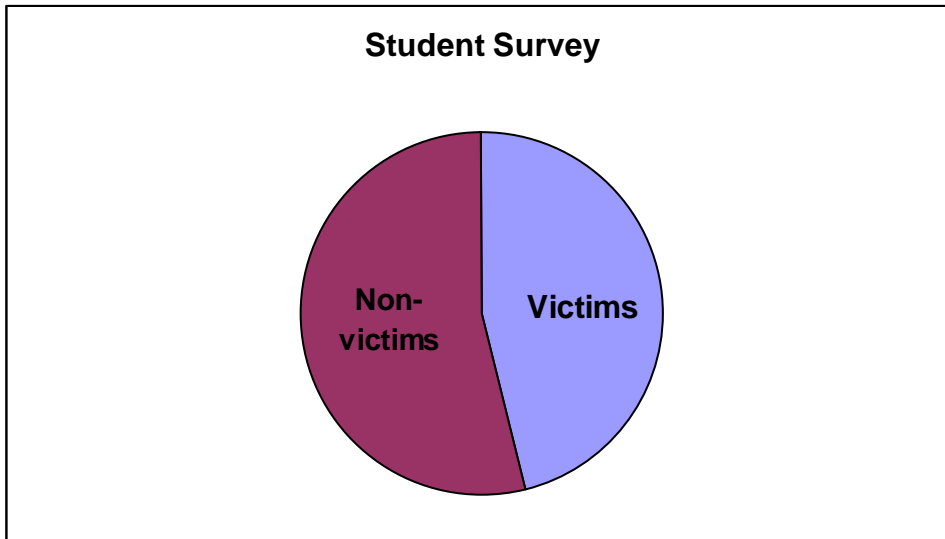
All schools surveyed stated that they include basic crime prevention ideas in the employee's handbook, the student's handbook, and through public service announcements on radio and television Medias. These basic crime prevention ideas involve the use of locks on lockers, locking doors, labeling items, and keeping valuable items out of sight.

The one hundred teachers responding to the survey stated they feel "comfortable" in the school in which they teach. Seventy-one of the teachers stated they have been victims of crime while at school. All seventy-one cited the number one reason for being a victim was failing to follow basic crime prevention: locking their door. All teachers stated if they had of locked or secured their door then the theft would have been prevented. These teachers were victims of theft. The item most stolen was their purse or billfold out of their classroom. Teachers stated that the second most stolen item was electronic equipment. Computers, televisions, VCR's, stereos, and calculators ranked as the second most stolen items from the classroom. Due to the cost of these items the loss in dollar amounts was very high. Most of these items belonged to the

school district and not to the teacher. These items were taken in burglaries of the buildings. The teachers also reported twelve were victims of vehicle burglaries in which their stereo and purse was taken. The teachers concluded that the majority of the time on campus they were crime free.



Students were also surveyed. The students stated that they were victims of theft at school. Ninety-three of the two-hundred students stated they were victims of theft. These students reported items stolen were cash, jewelry, clothes, books, and electronic equipment. Most items were taken during class from their lockers. Fifty-seven stated they used locks but were not sure they were locked. Thirty-six stated that they were not using locks or were sharing lockers with other people. All of these students stated that they have been victims more the one time. The students that were not victims have known at least one person that was a victim.



Students were asked if they would tell on another student if they observed the other student stealing. The students responding stated that "it depends". The follow up question to the students was, depends on what? The answers were what was being stolen? Who it was being stolen from? and why were they stealing? The students stated they would tell on someone stealing if they were the victims of the theft. They stated that the main reason that they would not tell on anyone is that they would be labeled as a

snitch. Being a snitch according to the students gets you beaten up and they do not want to be labeled or assaulted. Two hundred and fourteen stated they would tell on someone if they could be kept anonymous. Only five of the schools reported having a crime line type of system that takes information anonymously and pays rewards.

Schools were built for teaching and not for crime prevention. With the technology we have today schools are using this technology to help prevent crime. Schools are using video cameras to monitor halls, parking lots, cafeterias, gymnasiums, and buses. Schools are using identification cards to identify students. Metal detectors are being used to provide safety from weapons. Even schools are being designed to detour crime. All these technological advances cost lots of money. Today our schools are facing a budget crunch that cannot employ these technological crime prevention systems. With a basic guide to crime prevention, schools can do the best they can with the minimal amount of resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Texas school districts are in a current financial burden. Funding for education is at the top of all school districts decision making processes. Schools are being asked to help lower the cost of education through budget cuts. School districts can lower budgets by implementing basic crime prevention techniques to reduce the amount of items being stolen.

Although schools have tightened the security of their schools as a result of the Columbine School shootings and the terrorist attacks, most schools have forgotten very basic and common crime prevention techniques to reduce theft.

Metal detectors are in place to discourage weapons being brought to school. New postal standards are being implemented to prevent terrorist attacks with biological hazards. Nitrate sniffing dogs are being brought in to check for possible bombs. Schools are spending large amounts of money on these programs to keep their students safe. Schools have overlooked investing in basic crime prevention to discourage theft. Can basic crime prevention techniques be used to lower theft rates and save school districts money?

This research and study was made in order to determine if basic crime prevention techniques could save the school districts money. It was hypothesized that school districts could save thousands of dollars if basic crime prevention was implemented.

A conclusion was made based on reviewing of literature and through responses of twenty-five schools who participated in the survey. Students, teachers, and administrators also were included in the survey. Schools could benefit from basic crime prevention techniques. All schools have basic techniques in place but getting individuals to actually implement them is where the problem lies. There is no one hundred percent solution to the theft problem but using basic crime prevention techniques does reduce the amount of crime.

If law enforcement could help the school districts implement these basic crime prevention techniques then the school districts could save money. The schools would benefit budget wise. The law enforcement could save man-hours on theft calls at schools.

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