

GUNS



School Safety

The recent Sandy Hook shooting has brought new and heightened attention to issues surrounding school safety. Parents, leaders, and the media are questioning whether schools are safe places for students and educators. Educators are on the front lines of this issue, and their opinions are at the heart of understanding the gravity of this important social topic.

School Improvement Network conducted a survey January 23-29 of 2013 asking educators nationwide for their thoughts on guns and school safety. Respondents included 10,661 educators from all 50 states, including 1,674 school or district administrators.

The survey included nine yes-no questions, and four items that used a 1-6 rating scale (Likert). Responses to the items on the six-point scale were grouped into 1-3 and 4-6 for ease of communication and interpretation—thus percentages of educators who “feel” a certain way represent the aggregate of the 1-3 or 4-6 ratings for that item. Other percentages shown are explained by the specific words used for labeling the six-point scale for each given item. The

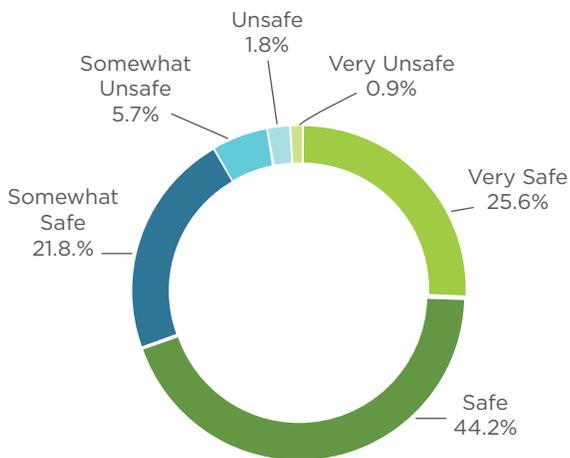
survey also included one free-response textbox for which the responses were grouped into six categories using a common Delphi technique. From these results, educator perspective can be drawn about three key issues regarding guns and school safety.

ARE SCHOOLS SAFE?

The first question asked was, “How safe do you feel in your school?” 91.6% of the educators say they feel safe in schools, even after the recent tragedy. 69.8% of educators believe their school is either safe or very safe, while only 2.7% report feeling either unsafe or very unsafe.¹ 55.2% of respondents who feel safe or very safe are educators with 16+ years of experience in education.

¹ With over 10,000 responses, difference in percentages of as little as 1% are statistically significant. Therefore, all percentages in these findings can be interpreted at face value, and none is accompanied by p-values to explain levels of statistical significance.

HOW SAFE DO EDUCATORS FEEL IN SCHOOL?



Mirroring their own pattern of perceived fears, 94.5% of educators believe their students feel safe in schools, including 75.8% who say they believe their students feel safe or very safe. Only 1.4% say they believe their students feel unsafe or very unsafe.

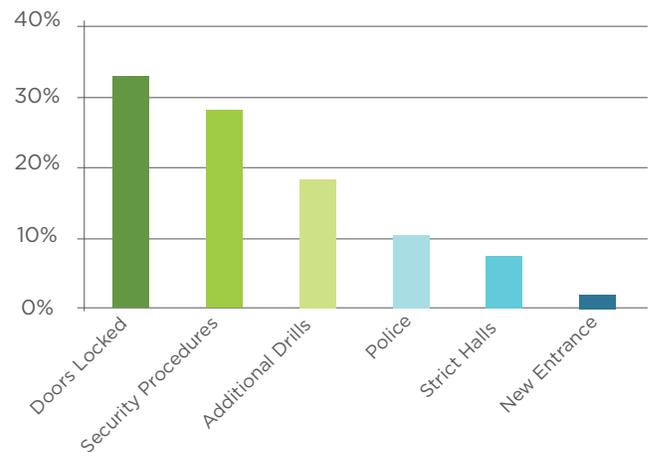
However, despite feeling safe themselves and believing their students feel safe, most educators say their schools are not safe from gun violence. When asked, “Do you feel your school is a safe place from gun violence?” 31.1% of educators say no. 14.1% of educators who feel their schools are safe in response to the previous questions do not believe their school is safe from gun violence. Notably, 38.4% of all superintendents who responded say their schools are not safe from gun violence.

HOW HAVE SCHOOLS REACTED TO THE SANDY HOOK SHOOTING?

When questioned about what security changes schools have made in reaction to the Sandy Hook shooting, educator responses indicate that 68.2% of schools have taken steps to increase safety since the shooting. 33.1% say their schools have added new door locking systems, fewer doors left open, or other door-related security measures. 28.3% report new security procedures such as more security cameras or new lockdown procedures.

18.4% say their schools have done more safety drills in the instance of an armed intruder, and 10.4% say they have added or increased police presence on campus in some capacity (part-time guard, police drivebys, etc.). Only 36.9% of educators say their schools currently have some type of armed guards on campus during classroom hours. However, 66.1% of educators who work at schools with armed guards believe the guards make the school a safer place. Interestingly, only 4.7% of educators say their schools have added full-time armed police since the Sandy Hook shooting, and only an additional 5.8% state their schools plan on getting one.

STEPS TAKEN TO INCREASE SAFETY SINCE SANDY HOOK



Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Doors Locked	2,232	33.1%	33.1%
Security Procedures	1,916	28.3%	61.4%
Additional Drills	1,245	18.4%	79.8%
Police	703	10.4%	90.2%
Strict Halls	507	7.5%	97.7%
New Entrance	158	2.3%	100.0%
Total	6,761	100%	

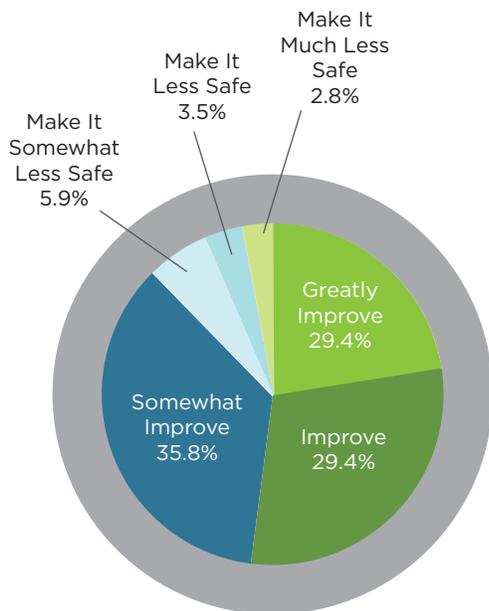
90.4% of educators say their schools already had a plan in place in the case of an armed intruder, and of the 9.6% that did not, 81.0% now do. 69.9% of educators who believe their school is a safe place reside in schools that have taken steps to increase safety in the classroom.

HOW DO EDUCATORS FEEL ABOUT GUNS IN SCHOOL?

Finally, educators were questioned about how they feel an armed presence in school would impact school safety. While most educators agree they would not bring a gun or firearm to school themselves, the majority say an armed guard in schools would have a positive impact on school safety.

When asked, “Do you feel that having an armed police officer in your school would improve safety or make your school less safe?” 87.8% of educators collectively say having an armed police officer would improve safety, while 12.2% say such a presence would make schools less safe. 52% say armed police would improve or greatly improve safety, while 6.3% say it would make schools less safe or much less safe.

HOW WOULD HAVING AN ARMED GUARD ON CAMPUS AFFECT SCHOOL SAFETY?



72.4% of educators say they would be unlikely to bring a firearm to school if they were allowed to do so. 36.3% of educators surveyed report owning a firearm, 37.1% of whom say they would be likely or very likely to bring it to school if allowed.

CONCLUSION

Even after the recent Sandy Hook shooting, most educators say they feel safe in school and believe their students feel the same. Perhaps the most interesting finding is that educators do not equate feeling safe in their schools with feeling safe from gun violence. Although the reaction to the Sandy Hook shooting and other instances of school violence have been explosive publicly, the most common new safety measure being adopted is locking doors or keeping fewer open during the school day. Finally, the majority of educators feel an armed guard would increase school safety, though do not desire to be an armed presence at schools themselves.