



GLASS

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GLASS CONFERENCE 2025 UNLOCKED

The People, The Ideas, The Impact

The inaugural Great Lakes Association for School Safety Conference brought together school safety leaders, front line and administrative professionals, and law enforcement to discuss pressing issues, share insights, and explore opportunities for collaboration. The event achieved its aim to exchange and increase knowledge of school safety, bring awareness of available solutions, and foster connection among participants. Guy Bliesner, from Idaho's Office of School Safety and Security, said, "The content at this conference was as good as any I have ever been to."



KEYNOTE SPEECHES

GLASS 2025 was graced with two nationally known keynote speakers, Mr. Frank DeAngelis and Mr. Jin Kim. The conference opened with Frank DeAngelis, sharing his experience as the High School Principal at Columbine HS from 1996 to 2014. Mr. DeAngelis shared lessons as a 35-year educator surviving the attack at the school and rebuilding the community afterwards. His book, "They Call Me Mr. De: The Story of Columbine's Heart, Resilience, and Recovery" covers many aspects shared.

Mr. Jin Kim closed the conference sharing information gleaned from his career as the FBI New York office's Supervisory Agent for Active Violence. From reviewing hundreds of incidents and years of providing training and guidance to organizations, Mr. Kim has become one of the nation's leading experts in active shooter preparation.

These talks highlighted the need for specific expertise in school safety, with someone able to lead a multi-disciplinary approach for the district. The lessons learned included being involved in the lives of those around you, involving different backgrounds in safety planning and preparation, and continuing development through education.

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CONFERENCE SESSIONS RECAP

This year's conference featured two dynamic learning tracks: the **Foundations of School Safety (FSS) certification** course and a full day of general sessions led by school safety leaders from across the region. The FSS certification, provided by ACAP-Solutions, was also approved by MCOLES and the Michigan Department of Education. Topics included emergency planning, grant writing, radicalization awareness, international travel risks, and more.

Interactive breakouts allowed participants to engage with national experts and share real-world strategies, while panel discussions bookended the event—offering diverse insights from ACAP consultants, school safety directors, law enforcement, and education leaders.



NETWORKING

The conference included dedicated networking sessions, allowing attendees to connect with peers, exchange ideas, and establish professional relationships. Especially important during these times were the opportunities to learn about industry solutions: those reached by other practitioners, available products, and conversation. These sessions were hosted in the expo hall and were highly valued by participants aiming to expand their networks and seek collaboration opportunities.



Key Outcomes

The conference concluded with a summary of actionable insights and recommendations for future initiatives. Highlights included:

- ▶ Commitment to ongoing education seeking input and ideas from experts and others in the field
- ▶ Recognition of the transformative potential of emerging technologies
- ▶ Emphasis on school safety as a broader approach than security measures

CONCLUSION

Overall, the inaugural Great Lakes Association for School Safety Conference was a resounding success, creating a gathering point for meaningful education and collaboration with experts from across the nation in our backyard. The learning and discussions will undoubtedly inspire progress and innovation in the future of school safety. Everyone is already looking forward to the next year!



SIMPLIFYING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Do you have standard terms or do you have Simplified Response?

By: Anthony Beattie & Jackie Noto, ACAP Solutions

Many organizations are working to “stake a claim” in the “active shooter” response. A few of these even expand to emergency response, incorporating commands for other scenarios. Yet when working on proper terminology, consideration should be given to many aspects. Most importantly, these include:

▶ **Research & lessons learned from events**

- o Experience shows us most staff are overwhelmed by the “playbook” approach
- o Research shows us people are not prepared / response can be generalized/ generalization = action = lives saved

▶ **9/11 lessons**

- o Plain language is necessary

▶ **Radio / auditory issues**

- o DISTINCT words, readily distinguished from each other to avoid mix-ups, are needed
- o Research – words have meaning, so pick words that lead to the action to be taken

▶ **Color coding (& color blindness)**

- o Emergency Notification Systems should have audio/visual response.
- o Primary colors should be used / ADA has screen provisions

▶ **Historic relevance**

- o Word choice matters because of what has been used, good and bad
- o Terms like “LOCKDOWN”, “Secure Mode”, “Reverse-evacuation” create complications

▶ **Steps of different responses**

- o The challenge of a “playbook” vs. generalization for most people
- o Reducing the number of responses and the number of different steps helps people move.



Research & Experience

In the many schools that we have worked with, asking staff about their individual response to an example emergency usually resulted in “um”. In schools with multi-tabbed Emergency Booklets (the plastic covered, spiral bound notebooks), many staff would point to the book – then get lost flipping pages. When asked to explain what steps they might take, “I think” and “I might” were common responses.



Across emergencies, previous research has shown that an average of 75% of individuals remain inactive when facing danger (Leach, 2004; Mawson, 2005). This inactivity can be labeled as “freezing,” where an individual is passive, standing still, and potentially, not evacuating even if the opportunity presents itself. However, research has also shown that individuals can decrease “freezing” by engaging in training and rehearsal of appropriate response behaviors (Leach, 2004; Noto et al., 2024).



9/11 lessons

The attack on the World Trade Center, September 11, 2001 was a tragedy, for the lives lost directly in the attack and for the lives lost through rescue efforts. There were many lessons learned through those events, which should not be forgotten. Most relevant here are the lessons of “10 codes.”

Every agency in the region responded to the World Trade Center that day, each bringing with them their own “language” in the form of abbreviations (cops and teachers

love their acronyms) and codes (10-4 is only one of 100 codes, and even that isn’t universal). The connection here is that simple words which have standard or universal meaning are important for clear communication.

When creating command terms, it is beneficial to consider the context of the scenario. Stress exposure training research has identified that extreme levels of stress may lead to inferior performance or counterproductive reactions, such as decreased fine-motor skills or increased response time to verbal behavior (Driskell & Johnston, 1998; Grossman & Christensen, 2007). Therefore, clear command terms and instructions will help to set performers up for success. When setting up command terms, selecting verbiage rooted in specific behaviors can be helpful in setting up clear expectations.

Radio/auditory

Akin to the lessons of codes are the experiences of many users with garbled radio traffic. Worse are old PA systems in schools, making Charlie Brown’s teacher sound good. So using a few terms, widely different from each other, to direct emergency responses in mass communications means that everyone gets the same message. Literally.

Studies also shows that people follow the meaning of the words they hear. This means that regardless of the training around terminology (which is needed), people are going to respond to the command words used. This emphasizes the importance of using words that indicate the action taken . Complicated terms like “reverse-evacuation” aren’t readily understood to direct movement , they require thought to process the intent; thought that is hard to come by in emergencies .

SERD CONTINUED

Others like “lockdown”, especially when combined with qualifying terms “hard”, “soft”, etc., don’t always speak to what they intend (prison use is very different from what is intended in schools). These lead to further complications when they don’t directly match the application. For example, lockdown often means to lock everything and eliminate movement, yet multi-option responses, like Avoid-Barricade-Counter, are shown to have an increased likelihood of causality prevention.

An additional example of term confusion is the use of “Secure Mode.” Instead of providing an additional layer of protection, “Secure Mode” does the opposite. By including it in planning and preparation, by its mere existence, the message is conveyed that buildings do not fully need to be secured. Telling staff or students that someone will check the doors as soon as the command is given is as good as giving them permission to do it, regardless of what policy says. Such terms should be eliminated from campus-wide communication. If certain actions are desired, specific, small groups should be prepared and contacted as needed.

Color coding

When encountering emergency scenarios in loud areas with limited acoustic conveyance (shops, gyms, and music rooms) or for those with hearing loss or impairment, visual cues can be supplemental aid to auditory alarms. To further clarify message communication, each response can be given a color. Using primary colors here eliminates possible confusion or perception issues from color-blindness. Different colors and noises or commands are then associated with different responses. For example, no one misses the bright white strobe of the fire alarms signaling to exit the building.

History matters

History, the long-term use of terms and directions, also matters as individuals have paired terms with respective responses. Therefore, one might argue there is no need to create new terminology. For example, “EXIT” signs have been required in buildings as long as fire alarms in many areas. “Evacuation” signs are usually posted along designated highway routes in hurricane or tsunami areas.

Similarly, the term “lockdown” has long been used in prisons and jails, which likely accounts for the transfer of the term to schools as police call for a school to close exterior doors by using the term they know. However, going back to the lesson of plain language, what *should* be done is to notify the school of what is happening and let the school decide the response. For example, police using K-9 units to track a subject *near* a school is a different response from an armed attacker *at* the school.

Response Steps

Finally, our work has shown us that – no matter the emergency – the basic response steps for all emergencies are the same. The same process can then be instructed to staff to be generalized or used across multiple scenarios. Rather than a different set of directions for every conceivable emergency, this concept has been shown to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and expedite action, moving occupants more calmly to desired locations.

This results in a simple set of response actions relevant to all emergencies. Instead of being overwhelmed by referring to a booklet, flipping to the page indicated, then reviewing every action directed for that incident, occupants can simply begin moving to a safer location. Stress is reduced simply in reducing the number of choices that have to be made, more in the number of actions to be remembered.

Next

There are plentiful considerations for **simplified response**. We're proud of the work we've done. Preparedness is never a onetime project—it's an ongoing commitment. If your team is ready to strengthen your emergency response, train your staff, or test your procedures through realistic exercises, ACAP would be honored to help. Let's work together to ensure when seconds count, your people know exactly what to do.

See the papers that led to this article *and more* on our website at [Ask The Experts – ACAP](#). And Stay Safe!

ACAP

ACAP provides School Safety Coordination consulting and training. Consulting provides a team of experts at a fraction of the cost of one hired staff member, giving greater knowledge base as it is needed. Recognizing that many schools want a staff person to take on additional duties and hire an individual with a specific background, ACAP experts also provide training to School Safety Coordinators to broaden their knowledge base into the areas where they have less experience.

Comprehensive school safety goes beyond security, beyond behavioral assessment and management, and incorporates a multitude of aspects into daily school life. Done properly, schools maintain their warmth, appeal, and inclusion, while providing a safe and secure environment which promotes learning. Not another security firm, ACAP focuses on schools and understands the differences that make them a special place.

Solutions for School Safety



ACAP-solutions.com

MEMBER VOICE



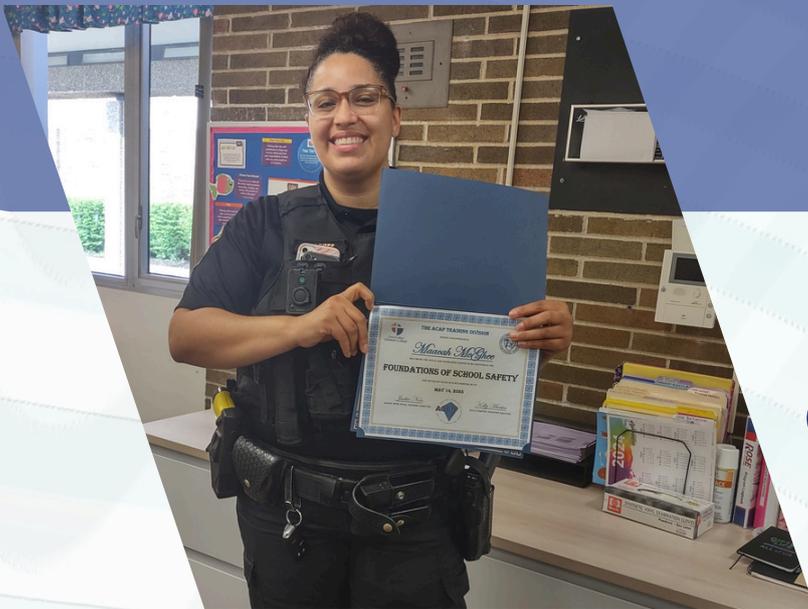
“Very informative. I learned a lot and encourage anyone who gets the opportunity to come and check this out. Great time. Great instructors.”
-Ryan Maggert, SRO

Feedback from GLASS 2025

“A lot of like minded people for school safety. All of the different aspects of school safety and being in a room with both police and educators, bouncing ideas off of each other.”
-Andrew Groeneveld,
SRO Marshall PD

“I’ve learned that we are on the right track in Comstock but do we do need to improve? The answer is yes. There were a lot of takeaways. It’s been a good conference.
-Jay Birchmeyer, Administrator,
Comstock Public Schools

“Great venue here. Had a great 3 days. Lots of wonderful people. A good time to meet new people and get to work on school safety.”
-Melissa Bell, Administrator
Monroe Public Schools



INFO FOR GLASS CONFERENCE 2026 COMING SOON!

Share your success!

Is your district or school resource program launching a new school safety initiative, completing a facility upgrade, or seeing results from a recent program? We want to highlight the outstanding work happening across the Great Lakes region.

Submit your story, photos, or key takeaways for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue of the GLASS Quarterly Dispatch.

Email us at info@greatlakeschoolsafety.org and we'll follow up to learn more. Let's showcase what works- because strong ideas deserve a bigger audience.

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info@GreatLakesSchoolSafety.org