

**"LESSONS LEARNED FROM NEW YORK: HOW
SCHOOLS RESPONDED TO THE TERRORIST ATTACK
ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001"**

Los Angeles County, Sponsor

*Santa Fe Springs Town Center
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SPEAKERS/TITLES

Dennis Beene, Assistant Chief, California OES Law Enforcement
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Anna Switzer, Principal, Public School 234, New York City Schools
Sue Ann Salmon Evans, Attorney, Miller, Brown, and Dannis, California sites

BEENE:

Presented a power point presentation regarding terrorism.

KLASFELD:

New York school demographics (1.1 million students, 1300 buildings)

No students hurt during the event

Teachers stayed on duty

Their evacuation plans indicated they go to nearest school

- .This didn't work well
- .Must develop much broader evacuation plans
- .Staff did figure out what to do under the circumstances

New York Police Department provide security at schools

- .3000 School Safety Officers under the direction of NYPD
- .Two years ago developed a system of having all school plans online
- .Plans available to outside agencies such as NYPD and NYFD
- .Police review plans before they go online

School Closures

- .On September 11, 2001, at 10 a.m. they decided wouldn't close all schools
- .Concentrated with impacted schools
- .Cancelled all afterschool programs (citywide)
- .Students at any school could be picked up by parent/guardian
- .Kids left afterschool were bused to a central area
- .Many students had lost both parents in attack
- .No students physically hurt
- .On September 12, all schools in the city were closed
- .On the third day, September 14, all city schools reopened except for those impacted and by Friday the 15th all opened were on a regular schedule

City Efforts

- .Mayor very active in dealing with problems
- .Office of Emergency Management was not available so they set it up at a vacant pier
- .Mayor met with city officials every morning for two hours

Immediate Decisions

- .Needed to replace schools in the Ground Zero area
- .Schools in area were used as meeting places and staging areas for workers
- .School kitchens provided food for workers
- .Students at impacted schools moved to other schools resulting in overcrowding
- .Schedules at receiving schools altered to deal with new students
- .In future planning this situation will be better planned. Where do displaced students go?
- .Stuyvesant High School went on a divided day schedule at another school. The host school students were on an a.m. schedule and visiting students on a p.m. p.m. schedule
- .Parents were irate over schedules. Interfered with their work schedules, etc.

Returning to Impacted Schools

- .Most people agreed that the sooner you return the better
- .District hired the best, outside, environmental people to make decisions regarding When schools could be reopened. Cost was no objective.
- .Biggest problem was dust and debris.
- .Parents were given full disclosure about situation at all times
- .Experts from outside District monitored school clean-up
- .The trauma of returning overshadowed all other problems

Parents

- .Each parent had to decide what was best for his or her child
- .No enticements offered
- .No extra services
- .Parent requests to move to another school honored
- .Many parents, especially those who lived near Ground Zero wanted everything back to normal as soon as possible
- .The largest group of parents didn't trust the Board of Education anyway so the District used OUTSIDE clean-up experts, not school people
- .Hired people to clean-up regardless of cost. Hired the best available
- .Hired another company to monitor the clean-up group
- .Some parent's hired their own experts (Board ok'd)
- .District provided a list of Crisis Counselors
- .Some parents felt that reopening so quickly was due to outside pressure from Governor, President and Mayor. Not so. Safety of students paramount

Stuyvesant High School reopened on October 9th

- .Chancellor moved his office to the school for a week - a symbolic gesture

FEMA

- .Told District they would do everything necessary to help, but later accused District of overspending

Teacher's Union was cooperative

One parent sued the District for re-opening a certain school too soon

ULTIMATELY THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR ON THE RETURN OF STUDENTS AND THE RE-OPENING OF THE SCHOOLS WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR AND THE PARENTS WHO TRUSTED THAT ADMINISTRATOR

SWITZER: www.ps234.org

Her school was two blocks from WTC

September 11th was the 4th day at school for regular students but the first day for kindergartners

Event turned into a 5-month emergency

Her PTA president was extremely helpful - an ex-military person

Being responsible for students in a situation like they faced was "awesome"

Teachers were very supportive. Worked overtime and on weekends

Being prepared is extremely important

First Tension (her way of describing the events)

- .Following rules and not being afraid of taking risks
- .Each school needs a customized plan for their school
- .Many rules had to be broken that day
- .Release of students important
- .Moved 100 kids to PS 41. This eventually doubled the size of PS 41
- .She released teachers if they wanted to leave
- .Cell phones did not work- useless

Second Tension

- .Communication important
- .Regular letters to parents with updates
- .Regular business had to go on
- .PS 41 now had 1300 kids. Three teachers per room
- .Had a teacher meeting everyday for 45 minutes
- .Two thirds of parents utilized their Web site for updates
- .Spent much time moving things to the new site at PS 41
- .Everyone wanted to return to their regular school ASAP
- .School clean-up took longer than expected
- .Many parents resisted going back to original site

Third Tension

- .First people to take care of were her staff. They had to be able to take care of students
- .On the second day they had a staff meeting
- .They obtained an excellent crisis counselor to assist
- .Teachers concerned with space and schedules
- .Teachers didn't want to work on weekends. They could have been paid but didn't want the money - they needed the time off
- .Parents were very helpful and supportive
- .It was good to focus on work

Mental Health Aspect

- .Important to have crisis counselors from within; they wanted someone they knew

Moving

- .Many surveys and questionnaires sent to parents to get their input on various issues
- .Had to remember real purpose of school
- .Many kids did reading and art projects regarding event
- .A lot of emphasis on what they liked about living and going to school downtown

Kid Safety

- .Kids were orderly
- .Kids helped one another
- .No arguments or fights and followed directions

Nitty Gritty

- .They received a lot of donations including money
- .Developed guidelines on how to handle donations

Media

- .Really not your friend but they had a job to do
- .School needed to protect students and family

Going Back

- .She felt that they needed about three to four weeks to prepare for return to PS 234 site
- .Because of the moving around, some parents felt they were being used by the system

Superiors

- .They don't like to be surprised. Keep them informed

Getting Ready

- .On day of event, no support from police, fire or EMT
- .Know whom you can count on

EVANS:

Presented material regarding the legal aspects of school personnel during emergencies

Same coverage (no liability) as in California

Prepared by: Pete Anderson, LAUSD Office of Emergency Services