

Running head: SAFETY CURRICULUM IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Safety Curriculum in Elementary Schools:  
Bringing Fire Departments Back into the Classrooms

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**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another. I further certify that this work is my own effort and does not represent any position held by the City of Las Vegas or of Las Vegas Fire and Rescue, and was in no way commissioned by either entity.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Sherrri A. Wilcox

**ABSTRACT**

Clark County School District (CCSD) is the nation's fifth largest, providing education to over 300,000 students in 352 schools. CCSD is a powerful organization and is Nevada's single largest employer. None of the five fire departments serving Clark County have the capacity to deliver quality public education lessons throughout the nearly 8,000 square mile school district, and budget cuts have reduced previous capabilities even more. The problem is that life safety education as delivered by fire department personnel in Southern Nevada's elementary school classrooms has become random and inconsistent. The purpose of this applied research project is to determine what would be the most effective type of safety education program for local fire departments and other potential partners to collaborate in delivering to CCSD's students, and to recommend the first steps toward development of such a program. Both historical and descriptive research methods were used to answer questions about what safety programs are available, what CCSD's requirements are, what programs were previously successful in Clark County, and how programs were delivered. Procedures included both literary research and interviews with school district personnel and fire department public educators. The project identified some previously unknown communication issues between fire departments and other organizations, as well as a gap in school district information flow. Historical record keeping of programs and effective evaluation were also found to be lax in most of the fire departments. The recommendations address the previously unknown issues while outlining the development of a comprehensive new safety education program that is delivered electronically, taught by school teachers, supported by public safety agencies, includes multiple hazard topics with a variety of approved resources, provides continuing education credits for participating teachers, and includes a professionally developed evaluation tool.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Certification Statement ..... page 2

Abstract ..... page 3

Table of Contents ..... page 4

Introduction ..... page 5

Background and Significance ..... page 7

Literature Review ..... page 10

Procedures ..... page 14

Results ..... page 17

Discussion ..... page 24

Recommendations ..... page 28

References ..... page 33

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Additional Resources for Single-Risk Safety Lessons..... page 36

Appendix B: Interview with Program Manager Cheryl Wagner..... page 37

Appendix C: Interviews with Fire Department Public Educators..... page 39

Appendix D: Group Interview with CCSD Teachers ..... page 42

## INTRODUCTION

Though the United States enjoys one of the best standards of living in the world, unintentional injuries continue to be the leading cause of death to children aged 14 and under in this country (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2009, p. 34). According to data released by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), by far the greatest number of injuries to both adults and children is occurring in their own homes (Adams, Heyman, and Vickerie, 2009, from Table 13, p. 34). Furthermore, injuries and deaths in the home are on the rise. A recent report from the National Safety Council (NSC) indicates that while motor-vehicle, work-related, and public deaths decreased from 2007 to 2008, fatalities in a home setting have risen (NSC, 2010).

Why does the nation have this on-going problem? The optimistic belief that “it can’t happen to me”, coupled with the concept that most unintentional injuries were the result of an incident for which nobody was responsible creates a never-ending cycle of “accidents”. Researchers for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that “priority health-risk behaviors, which are behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among youth and adults, often are established during childhood and adolescence, extend into adulthood, are interrelated, and are preventable.” (Eaton, et al., 2008, Abstract, p. 1). The concept that a lifetime of risky behavior is established at a young age is a primary reason for beginning fire and injury prevention lessons during a child’s elementary school years.

The fire service has been a willing partner in bringing safety lessons to schoolchildren throughout its history. Various fire protection related organizations such as The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the International Fire Marshals Association (IFMA) have

coordinated fire prevention education activities every October since President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the first National Fire Prevention Day in 1920 (NFPA, n.d., Fire Prevention Week section, para. 8). Today's fire department personnel teach kids more than just "Stop, Drop, and Roll"; they offer lessons ranging from water safety to poisoning prevention throughout the year and can choose from a wide variety of professionally prepared children's life safety lessons, educational props, and even age-appropriate videos.

Unintentional injuries are not just a random national phenomenon; they are the leading cause of death for Nevada's youth as well (Children's Safety Network, 2010, p. 1). The first responders of Southern Nevada work to reduce these injury deaths and share a responsibility for delivering life safety messages to local schoolchildren. Each of the five fire protection organizations operating within Clark County has delivered several different public education programs to elementary school students over the years. The problem is that the Clark County School District (CCSD) covers almost 8,000 square miles and no single public safety agency or jurisdiction within the District's vast boundaries has the budget or the logistical capability to deliver any of the previously utilized public education programs to the entire school district. Furthermore, there is currently no clear model in place that would allow for all of the jurisdictions to collaborate effectively with the school district to achieve this goal. At the same time, CCSD's educators have less time available than ever before within their daily schedules to program "elective" lessons. The result of these combined issues is that life safety education in Southern Nevada's elementary school classrooms has dwindled in many areas and has become random and inconsistent in its delivery.

The purpose of this applied research project is to determine what would be the most effective type of public safety education program for local fire departments, police departments, and other potential partners to assist in delivering to Clark County School District's students, and

to recommend the first steps toward development and implementation of such a program. This project will explore previously delivered programs, alternative delivery methods, school district requirements, logistical issues, and recommended evaluation methods to determine the program's effectiveness.

The descriptive research method will be used to identify the answers to the following questions: (a) what fire and life safety education programs are available to fire departments for delivery in school classrooms, and (b) what are the needs and requirements of CCSD, its educators, and the Nevada State Board of Education regarding classroom presentations by outside agencies? The historical research will help to develop an understanding of local past practices by answering the questions (c) which organizations have delivered specific public safety education programs with CCSD in the past, (d) which programs have been presented by fire departments, (e) how were the programs organized, delivered, and evaluated, and (f) which programs were considered successful and why? This information will identify which, if any, current resources or methods are still viable and where changes to past practices are advisable.

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Though unintentional injuries have remained a leading cause of death for children in Nevada for years, the State has no injury prevention strategic plan (Children's Safety Network, 2010, p. 5). Nevada struggles with minimal funding for its safety and injury prevention programs, and there is no clear lead organization coordinating safety message delivery throughout the state. The Nevada State Fire Marshal's Office has gone many years without a filled Public Education Officer position, even though this function is statutorily required. As a result of the State's inability to drive most types of safety programs, the burden falls on local jurisdictions to attempt to provide this service. In Clark County, where approximately 72% of the State's estimated 2.6 million residents live (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), providing fire

prevention and life safety education can be an overwhelming responsibility. For these reasons, local public safety agencies in Southern Nevada have worked to maximize their public education capabilities by reaching out to the Clark County School District (CCSD) in order to access the students in their classrooms.

Working with the school district can be intimidating to a small public safety agency. In Nevada, state law requires that each of the 17 counties operate its own school district for delivering public education from Kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level. This means that Clark County has a single school district to cover nearly 8,000 square miles of land area and provide education for over 300,000 students. CCSD currently operates 352 schools and is Nevada's largest employer with over 38,500 people on the payroll (CCSD, 2009). The sheer size of the school district creates a bureaucracy that makes communication about public education programs with small outside organizations difficult at best.

Adding to the communications challenge is the fact that there are five separate fire departments serving the residents of Clark County. The Clark County Fire Department (CCFD) is the largest, operating 40 fire stations and protecting everything from the famous Las Vegas Strip to the furthest reaches of rural Clark County. CCFD maintains staff including 650 paid career firefighters and 350 volunteer firefighters as well as over 100 support and inspection personnel (CCFD, 2009). Las Vegas Fire and Rescue (LVFR) protects the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Las Vegas, including the original downtown "Glitter Gulch" and the popular residential community of Summerlin. LVFR operates an all-career staff from 17 fire stations (City of Las Vegas, n.d.). Henderson Fire Department (HFD) provides fire suppression and emergency response services to the City of Henderson with 185 first-responders staged from nine fire stations (City of Henderson, n.d.). Boulder City Fire Department (BCFD) has one fire station within city limits and provides mutual aid support to the Hoover Dam area as well as

nearby hotel-casino properties (Boulder City, Nevada, n.d.). The North Las Vegas Fire Department (NLVFD) serves the northern portion of the Las Vegas valley including areas surrounding Nellis Air Force Base. NLVFD operates out of eight fire stations and provides fire suppression, emergency medical, fire prevention, inspection, and public education services with its 234 uniformed and civilian personnel (North Las Vegas, Nevada, n.d.).

Each of these fire departments has some history of offering various public education lessons in local school classrooms, but there has been little consistency to the messages delivered, and there are many schools that rarely are visited by public safety personnel. Though all five fire departments have previously had specific positions dedicated to public education functions, these positions and the budget allocated for them has largely been lost to a struggling economy. Two of the departments have completely eliminated the Public Educator position, and two others have assigned the life safety education function to other existing positions. As a direct result of these reductions, fire department participation in the delivery of elementary school safety lessons has dropped dramatically.

As the capability for local fire departments to deliver traditional classroom-based safety messages has dwindled, the availability of timeslots for such activities has also diminished. Due to stringent mandates resulting from No Child Left Behind legislation and other curriculum delivery and testing benchmarks, Nevada's educators have very little time left in their daily lesson plans to offer material that is not a part of the State's current educational requirements.

The reductions in classroom time, available public safety personnel, and funding for educational materials has resulted in the complete elimination of fire and life safety presentations in many of Clark County's schools, with only random appearances in others. Since helping young children learn to recognize risks and make safer choices improves the safety of the whole community, both at present and in the future, it is vital that Clark County's fire departments find

a way to come together and overcome these obstacles. The United States Fire Administration (USFA) supports community risk reduction efforts such as this within its recently revised Operational Objectives (USFA, 2009b, II-2); specifically, Objective #1, “Reduce risk at the local level through prevention and mitigation.” This project was also conducted in accordance with course requirements of the USFA’s Executive Analysis of Community Risk Reduction (EACRR) as delivered by the National Fire Academy. Outlining a public education program and developing a cooperative model for its delivery directly relates to the following Terminal Objective from the EACRR course: “The Executive Fire Officer (EFO) will be able to develop and implement a strategy for changing local policy regarding a pertinent community risk reduction issue.” (USFA, 2009a, p. SM 5-1).

## **LITURATURE REVIEW**

The fact that so many childhood injuries are both predictable and preventable suggests that targeted interventions should be successful at reducing the rates of many of these injuries. Children can learn about safety both at home and at school, and many resources are now available to both caregivers and educators. In a 2007 survey given by Safe Kids USA, parents were asked how they chose safety information to share with their children. Besides listening to other parents, the respondents were most likely to listen to rescue workers (58 %), healthcare professionals (49 %), and schools (26 %) (Safe Kids Worldwide, 2008, p. 13). Given this level of confidence in both first responders and school personnel, it is natural for these two groups to cooperate in delivering safety messages to students in their classrooms. Since modern fire service personnel are dispatched to a broad range of emergency incidents, it is a natural progression for their public safety messages to evolve beyond the traditional fire and burn prevention topics. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) supports this philosophy with the following reasoning:

Every time a child is injured or killed by an unintentional injury, everyone suffers - the child, his or her family, classmates and friends, and the entire community. Sadly, the vast majority of these injuries are not random "accidents" - they are predictable and preventable. With education, motivation, and the support of caring adults, NFPA believes that children can learn to be much safer (NFPA, 2010, para. 2).

It was this belief that drove the development of the NFPA Risk Watch children's safety curriculum. Risk Watch is a classroom-based curriculum of safety lessons designed to be taught by professional educators and supported by public safety personnel and parents. Risk Watch is offered in four age-appropriate modules that include fire and burn prevention, water safety, choking, suffocation, and strangling prevention, motor vehicle safety, firearms injury prevention, bicycle and pedestrian safety, poisoning prevention, and falls prevention. The NFPA supports this educational campaign with multiple online resources, a national Safe Communities program, downloadable lesson plans, and curriculum modules for purchase (NFPA, 2010). Risk Watch is widely recognized as one of the most comprehensive classroom-based injury prevention curriculums available, and was widely distributed throughout the United States and Canada using a competitive grant program called Risk Watch Champions. How effective is the program at preventing injuries and deaths? According to Sandra Araujo (2006) of the NFPA, the Risk Watch program has been specifically credited with saving 71 lives since 1998.

Another popular multiple-risk curriculum is the Masters of Disaster series distributed by the American Red Cross (American Red Cross, n.d., Overview section). This curriculum covers 11 themes including home safety topics, natural and man-made disasters, facing fear, and fire prevention. Masters of Disaster is available in three age-appropriate levels specifically tailored to meet the needs of students from Kindergarten through the eighth grade. Like Risk Watch,

Masters of Disaster was developed by a group of professional organizations and educators and was evaluated for effectiveness in several countries. The Masters of Disaster program, which was completely updated in 2007, is available in multiple formats for both parents and educators.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) also offers a collection of resources for teaching children about topics ranging from earthquake preparedness to fire prevention (FEMA, n.d.). Though the lessons and activities are not arranged into a structured curriculum, there are many different risk topics addressed, and some of the resources are available in multiple languages.

In answering the first research question, (a) what fire and life safety education programs are available to fire departments for delivery in school classrooms, the researcher found that though there are many single-issue safety lessons and tools available, there are very few comprehensive multiple-risk programs. Individual safety lesson plans on a wide variety of risks are available from multiple sources, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (n.d.), Disney Educational Productions (n.d.), and Lesson Plan Central (2002). Rainbow Valley Fire Department (RVFD) offers a very complete curriculum of DVD's, activities, and support tools for fire and burn prevention topics (RVFD, n.d.). There are even downloadable lesson plans available for such specific topics as railroad crossing and public transit safety, as provided by Operation Lifesaver on its website (Operation Lifesaver, 2009, Education Resources section). The many free and low-cost fire and safety classroom materials should make for an infinite number of combinations when putting together a multiple-hazard community risk reduction program for schoolchildren. Though this finding did not support the original research quest for complete programs, the list of sources for individual safety lesson plans is useful in its own right and is recorded in Appendix A for future researchers' access.

The answer to the second research question, what are the needs and requirements of CCSD, its educators, and the Nevada State Board of Education regarding classroom presentations by outside agencies, comes from CCSD's School-Community Partnership Program (CCSD, 2010, Partnership Office section). According to the school district's website, the School-Community Partnership Program's mission is "to connect business and community resources with school resources to enrich the educational experience and increase student achievement" (CCSD, 2010, para. 1). The Partnership Program began in 1983 and has grown to include hundreds of programs ranging from science to fine arts, with an emphasis on human resources and support of current classroom offerings (CCSD, 2010, para. 2).

According to School-Community Partnership Program Manager Cheryl Wagner (Appendix B, Interview), the school district has very specific requirements for bringing 'outside' programs into the classrooms. First, the lesson plan must be correlated to Nevada's teaching standards as issued by the Nevada State Board of Education for the correct age group and within a certain subject – usually Health Studies for safety related information. Next, the School-Community Partnership Program management will review and approve the program content before it making it available to the school district's teachers for classroom use. Finally, each school's principal must approve of an individual teacher's request to bring in 'outside' material or presenters. Most administrators are flexible, but the approval is on a case-by-case basis. There is no precedent for a program to be delivered by all teachers; each educator must make an individual request for an approved program and each administrator must specifically accept it.

In summary, this literature review sheds light on the previously introduced problem that there is no clear model for the five fire protection agencies in Clark County to cooperate with the school district in delivering a safety program to CCSD's students. The fact that each lesson plan must first be correlated to the State Board of Education's standards, approved by the School-

Community Partnership Program, and then specifically requested by each individual teacher seems to preclude the possibility of a single, widely delivered safety curriculum. That there are so many programs to choose from prior to seeking lesson plan approval also complicates the delivery of these safety messages. Finally, the lack of a coordinating effort among the different fire departments would seem to prevent any type of consistency in the effort to develop an approved program for global school district use.

## **PROCEDURES**

The descriptive research method was used to answer the first research question, (a) what fire and life safety education programs are available to fire departments for delivery in school classrooms? A literature review was conducted on the internet, at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center, and at the main branch of the local library, resulting in a list of publically available safety programs as well as lesson plans for individual hazards.

A combination of descriptive and historical methods were used to answer the second and third research questions, (b) what are the needs and requirements of CCSD, its educators, and the Nevada State Board of Education regarding classroom presentations by outside agencies, and (c) what organizations have delivered specific public safety education programs with CCSD in the past? A phone call was placed to CCSD's main information center, and the school district's representative was asked for guidance in contacting the most appropriate division of CCSD for this applied research project. Information was obtained for reaching the School-Community Partnership Program along with directions for accessing the website for this program. The researcher reviewed the website to determine its applicability and sent an electronic request for an interview to the program's directors. Since this project is studying safety topics, the School-Community Partnership Program supervisory staff selected a program manager who specifically coordinates safety programs to participate in this interview. Program Manager Cheryl A. Wagner

was interviewed on March 1, 2010. Interview questions included queries about which outside agencies have brought safety lessons to CCSD classrooms, what programs were delivered, how programs or lesson plans are evaluated, and what the State and local requirements are for presenting lessons in CCSD classrooms. Ms. Wagner's responses about how educators must select only from approved programs generated some additional questions for the CCSD teachers who would be interviewed next. The full narrative of Manager Wagner's interview is included in Appendix B.

A historical research approach was used to develop an understanding of local past practices by answering the questions (d) which programs were presented, (e) how were the programs organized, delivered, and evaluated, and (f) which programs were considered successful and why? The researcher first attempted a literature review to answer these questions, and discovered that the bulk of this information seems to be a matter of institutional memory rather than written documentation. The researcher then selected two different groups of people to interview for the answers to these questions; a group of experienced CCSD educators and staff members, and the public education officers or personnel responsible for this function from each fire department serving Clark County.

The public education representatives from the fire departments were each sent an electronic request for an interview with the intended question list attached. One week later, follow-up telephone calls were made to schedule appointments for the interviews. Several of the jurisdictions declined to respond, but most provided an interviewee to participate in this applied research project. The fire department public educators were asked to describe their positions and experience, outline the safety education programs that their agencies have delivered to CCSD classrooms, describe the delivery and evaluation of each program, and express what programs

were considered successful and why. These fire department educators were interviewed in early March, 2010, and the complete narrative of their interviews is found in Appendix C.

The last group interviewed for this project were the Clark County school teachers. As CCSD privacy policies prohibited the use of a general survey, educators were individually invited to participate in a group interview function. Educators with 15 or more years of teaching experience and previous employment in multiple schools within the district were invited to participate. A school psychologist and administrative staff were also included in the discussion group. The researcher provided refreshments to encourage attendance and create a more open and informal setting.

On Friday, March 5, 2010, the meeting was held at one of the educator's homes. Attendees were asked to log their participation on a sign-in sheet, and the discussion group proceedings were recorded so that the results could be reviewed and quoted accurately. After the project's purpose was introduced, each educator was asked to give a brief history of his or her teaching experience, including any personal participation in fire and life safety education presentations. Following the introductions, the teachers were asked to describe different safety programs that they had witnessed during their years with CCSD, including who the presenter was, how the program came to be delivered to the school, what programs were most effective and why, whether there were evaluations utilized, and whether any of these programs are still in use. The teachers were then asked to describe the process of bringing an "outside" presentation into their classrooms, including details as to why this activity seems to be declining, and what features would make a safety program more useful and popular. The meeting agenda, specific questions asked, and session notes are included in Appendix D, and a copy of the audio recording is included with this project submission.

The findings of the literature review and previously described interviews are provided in the Results section of this project. The following Discussion section analyzes the input of these professionals and how it affects current and future opportunities to implement safety education programs within the Clark County School District. The Recommendations section will then offer the researcher's summary and potential solutions to the identified issues.

## **RESULTS**

The completed Literature Review provided the information needed to answer the first research question, (a) what fire and life safety education programs are available to fire departments for delivery in school classrooms? The findings showed that, while there are many lesson plans available to the public for individual hazard topics, only a few comprehensive life safety education programs seem to be widely available. NFPA's Risk Watch (NFPA, 2010) and Masters of Disaster (American Red Cross, n.d.) were the only two professionally developed multiple-risk programs actively being distributed. FEMA maintains a website with links to multiple hazard resources for parents, teachers, and safety educators to use, but the lesson plans are more of a menu selection than a coordinated program. The number of organizations that offer safety lesson plans for single-risk topics, including the previously mentioned Safe Kids USA, Operation Lifesaver, Disney Educational Productions, and the Rainbow Valley Fire Department, is exhaustive and further examples are included as a separate resource list in Appendix A.

The research questions, (b) what are the needs and requirements of CCSD, its educators, and the Nevada State Board of Education regarding classroom presentations by outside agencies, and (c) what organizations have delivered specific public safety education programs with CCSD in the past, were answered through an interview with Program Manager Cheryl A. Wagner of CCSD's School-Community Partnership Program. Cheryl Wagner manages programs that are related to safety, an example of which is the successful Safe Routes to School program. Ms.

Wagner explained that the School-Community Partnership office exists to act as a liaison between the school district and organizations that want to give back to the community and interact with the students. When asked what organizations have been active in bringing safety messages to the classrooms, the top participating agencies did not include any of the fire departments. The agencies collaborating with CCSD on a most regular basis were Safe Kids – Clark County, Safe Community Partnership, Look-Out Kids About, the Southern Nevada Health District, and many of the Valley’s law enforcement agencies. Ms. Wagner noted that most fire departments had some function available for Fire Prevention Week each year. She indicated that these presentations are offered on a limited basis and are not typically a formal program, but more of an equipment display with a few safety messages added in.

Regarding what programs have been delivered the most consistently and how they were distributed, the answer was once again heavily weighted toward those programs that are typically presented by law enforcement personnel. Traffic safety programs, McGruff, D.A.R.E., bicycle safety rodeos, and Stranger Danger were the most frequently requested by the district’s educators for classroom presentations. Risk Watch, which had previously been correlated to the State Board of Education standards by a grant award, was still occasionally requested, but not as a fire department delivered unit. The distribution of classroom safety presentations is purely random since each program must be requested by an educator. The School-Community Partnership Program office keeps the school district’s teachers informed by sending out regular e-mail bulletins of approved program offerings, but most requests seem to be related to current school incidents. Ms. Wagner used an example of a school where students had just died in a traffic accident, saying that teachers in this situation will use the heightened awareness of the students as a teaching point and bring in an approved traffic safety presentation to reinforce the lesson.

When asked about which programs were the most successful and why, the interviewee indicated that McGruff, Safe Routes to Schools, D.A.R.E., and some community-specific programs were the most often called for. According to Ms. Wagner, the most successful programs have been “the ones that have a standardized format, strong national recognition as well as local support, teacher training to go with it, and outside funding. I guess that these are the most popular, not necessarily the most successful.” These same programs are still in use currently. On the subject of evaluation, the program manager indicated that though evaluation would probably prove actual program success, she questioned the validity of many evaluation tools and said that they were not often used.

The final questions for this interviewee were about the State and local requirements for classroom safety programs. She indicated that it is mandatory for a program to be correlated to the State Standards of Education for the appropriate age group and subject, approved by the Curriculum Development Division or the School-Community Partnership office, and that the administrator of the school must approve the request before a teacher can present an approved program. Ms. Wagner stated that most school principals are supportive of these programs, but some are more strict in what they will allow since the administrator is the one who is ultimately held responsible for the achievement ratings of the school.

The final research questions, (d) which programs have been presented by fire departments, (e) how were the programs organized, delivered, and evaluated, and (f) which programs were considered successful and why, were answered through interviews of public education personnel from the fire departments and experienced school teachers. The answers to the questions varied considerably between the two groups, and also differed from some of the answers given by the School-Community Partnership manager.

The public education personnel from all five fire departments were personally invited to participate in this project. A request for an interview was sent by electronic mail with the intended question list attached and was followed up a week later with a personal telephone call. Two representatives did not respond to the request at all, one agreed to return the call and set an appointment and never called back, and two agreed to the interview. This researcher has eight years of first hand information for one of the departments that didn't respond, and so two of Clark County's fire departments are not represented in these results.

Each of the fire department public education representatives were asked the same questions, and the full text of each interview can be found in Appendix C of this report. Meggan VanNess, who recently left her position to move to New York, was the Public Education Officer for the Clark County Fire Department for three years. Her background includes time spent in the fire department's training division and five years as a teacher for the Clark County School District. Mrs. VanNess' unique combination of experience gives her a broad perspective of public education as delivered by a fire department. Captain Cedric Williams, Public Information Officer and Community Liaison for the North Las Vegas Fire Department (NLVFD), directs the Las Vegas valley's most active fire department public education program. He has a full-time public education specialist assigned to assist him in the development and delivery of programs.

When asked what programs each agency has delivered to elementary schools in the past, Captain Williams listed several. He indicated that Take A Second, Protect A Child, which was developed in North Las Vegas, tops the list. NLVFD also operates a Sparky's Hazard House by request, has participated in Risk Watch activities in the past, and delivers a different program for October's Fire Prevention Month each year. Meggan VanNess indicated that CCFD has operated a Safety House on Wheels that typically visited 16 schools and 112 classrooms per year. Funding for the mobile safety program was cut in 2008. CCFD's tradition of fire station visits

was also cut in 2008 as the stations had become so busy that it was too difficult to get through an entire tour without being interrupted by a response assignment. Engine company visits from CCFD are usually reserved for special needs students by request of the teacher. According to Mrs. VanNess, her department still delivers a Fire Prevention Month program to 18 different schools each year. Las Vegas Fire and Rescue (LVFR) operates a fire safety house (mobile trailer) and a Sparky's Hazard House, along with some other public education props. School presentations with these tools have been severely limited within the past two years due to budget cuts as the Public Education Officer position, which had been active for over 20 years, was eliminated and the duties placed upon the existing Public Information Officer. LVFR schedules a limited number of fire station tours and engine company visits to schools, and also participates in a reading program. Like the other two departments, LVFR offers a different program for Fire Prevention Month each October, usually involving fire station open house functions. With the exception of NLVFD, most fire departments have drastically reduced their classroom participation this year due to the struggling economy.

Regarding program delivery methods and partnerships, only NLVFD appears to be currently engaged in public education in school classrooms. Captain Williams named Safe Kids – Clark County, the Southern Nevada Health District, the school district, and individual jurisdictions as partners and said that his most common delivery method was by single classroom presentation. He further indicated that the public education section of his department's website had further information on how to request presentations or volunteer as a partner.

When asked what programs were the most successful, CCFD's Meggan VanNess said that she thought that the Safety House on Wheels was that department's most consistently successful program because it used age-appropriate messages and the students were engaged in an activity rather than receiving a lecture. Captain Williams of NLVFD said that he receives the

most positive feedback from his Take A Second, Protect A Child program, and believes that it is successful because it is targeted to current events that the community already has a raised awareness of, such as a local increase in drowning incidents. LVFR has had previous success with its Fire Safety House as well, and received very positive feedback the two years that it participated in the Risk Watch program.

The next question in the interview was about formal or informal evaluation tools. LVFR conducted pre-testing and post-testing of school children when working with the Risk Watch program, but has not and does not currently use any type of evaluation other than tracking the number of people or students who attend a given public education presentation. Captain Williams answered that NLVFD does keep data from surveys and teachers' evaluations of programs, and that the department also utilizes survey software to track burns and water-related accidents within the North Las Vegas jurisdiction. Meggan VanNess noted that CCFD attempted to use evaluative tools in the past but had a very poor return rate when the teachers were asked to complete them.

The final interview question for the fire department public educators asked what specific programs these public educators would bring to their jurisdiction if funding and personnel were not an issue. Captain Williams already has a children's safety village on the drawing board, and would use funding to complete this project and implement multiple programs through this venue. Meggan VanNess, whose fire department did not fill her vacant Public Education Officer position after she left Nevada, would renew that position and implement a year-round, multi-hazard safety program that provided training to teachers as well. LVFR would re-justify its Public Education Officer position and implement its Fire Safety House program again.

The interview responses from the CCSD teachers' group were quite different from the answers given by the fire department public educators. After an introductory session during

which each participant reviewed his or her teaching history and basic experience with fire and life safety lessons, the teachers were asked which approved safety lessons they have previously requested for their classrooms. Most indicated that they had not ever requested specific programs on their own, but participated in whole school activities that were organized by the school administrator. Many had participated in Fire Prevention Month activities, and several remembered the Lowes-Home Safety Council safety education trailers coming through town. A few teachers had students with a parent who was a fire fighter, and requested that this individual come to class on a Career Day. This was usually an informal request and had no specific curriculum attached to it other than a few brief safety messages.

When asked which of the available programs were the most effective, the teachers believed that the programs delivered by law enforcement personnel, such as D.A.R.E. and Stranger Danger, were the best. The participants felt that these programs were well-organized, widely recognized, consistent, and have strong local backing. Regarding evaluations, most had completed only teacher's evaluations, not measurements of the students or evaluations for program effectiveness.

The next question asked what programs were currently in use and what age groups these lessons were being delivered to. Most participants agreed that there are very few programs currently being offered due to budget cuts. When the researcher asked what approved programs were on the most recent update from the School-Community Partnership Program, only one of the participants seemed to be aware of this internal CCSD resource.

When the group was asked what factors make adding "extra" programs to their lesson plans challenging, they all responded at the same time. These educators feel that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has resulted in so much mandated testing that three months' worth of regular curriculum must now be delivered to the students in two months of time. The

researcher asked for more information about NCLB, and besides recording comments such as “It’s a joke”, and “It’s a pain in the neck”, received the following answer: “It’s a standard that’s measured with proficiency-based testing. It’s fine in theory, but doesn’t take into account things like language barriers or special education students.” In Nevada, special education students are not taught in separate classrooms, but are part of the regular student population of each class. CCSD’s educators are tasked with delivering the same curriculum just as effectively to every student in each classroom, regardless of the child’s abilities or challenges.

The final question for the group interview was: what features would make a fire and life safety education program a bigger benefit to your classroom efforts? The discussion ranged across several topics, but the most common answer was to “make it a required part of our curriculum so that we are required to teach it.” Other comments included suggestions to correlate programs to the State standards. Some teachers thought that CCSD needed to do a better job of letting them know what approved programs are already available; these were the same individuals who did not seem to be aware of the efforts of the School-Community Partnership office.

## **DISCUSSION**

Though a 2007 Safe Kids survey showed that parents trust rescue workers the most highly when it comes to the delivery of safety messages (Safe Kids Worldwide, 2008, p. 13), the fire departments of Clark County are apparently lagging in this endeavor. The literature review process found that there are at least two complete children’s safety curriculums, NFPA’s Risk Watch and the Masters of Disaster by the American Red Cross, available for public educators to use in school classrooms. Dozens more professionally developed safety lessons on single risk topics (Safe Kids USA, Operation Lifesaver, Disney Educational Productions, Rainbow Valley

Fire Department, and more) are also available, yet only one of Clark County's fire departments is actively engaged in any ongoing delivery of this type of material to the local school children.

Part of this lack of participation may be due to the complexity of the school district's program approval process. According to School-Community Partnership Program Manager Cheryl Wagner, whose interview was contained in the Literature Review, any program that is intended to be offered to CCSD's students must first be correlated to the State Board of Education standards for the intended age group and under an appropriate subject classification and then approved by the school district. Few fire department personnel would have any idea how to do this, or who to contact for help. Most are probably not even aware that there is an approval process required. Why are the programs that are supported by law enforcement organizations consistently requested and successfully administered in Clark County? Because these nationally recognized programs (D.A.R.E, Stranger Danger, and McGruff) have been put through CCSD's approval process, have been made available to the district's teachers, and are strongly promoted and supported by all local law enforcement agencies.

Another obstacle to fire department delivery of school-based safety lessons is CCSD's requirement that each individual educator must request a particular program. There is no precedent for a more widespread delivery of an approved safety program unless the school's lead administrator implements it that way. The closest thing to a coordinated program delivery by Clark County's fire departments is their participation in Fire Prevention Month activities, but since this generally consists of apparatus displays and free plastic helmets, it is not considered an educational curriculum by the school district. Another related issue uncovered during this project is that many CCSD educators may not be aware of the availability of correlated and approved programs for their use. CCSD Program Manager Cheryl Wagner indicated that approved

programs are e-mailed regularly to all of the district's educators, yet few of the teachers who were interviewed seemed to be aware of these offerings.

Ensuring that CCSD's educators are fully informed of the approved programs available for their use is only a part of the awareness issue. It is this researcher's experience that many personnel in Clark County's fire departments are not aware of their own organization's programs. Some CCFD firefighters had no idea that their department previously had a Public Education Officer position, much less that they recently lost it. Many LVFR personnel believe that the duty of a Public Education Officer is to conduct fire extinguisher training at the request of the public, and little else. NLVFD is the only local department that has clear-cut public education programs, a Community Liaison position to keep everyone informed and working together, and a dedicated Public Education Specialist position to implement the department's programs.

Another issue that inhibits the widespread delivery of a children's safety program in Clark County is budgetary constraints. When few funds are allocated to a fire department's public education effort, it becomes very difficult to fulfill many teacher's requests for presentations. If a fire department's management is not aware of its importance and/or does not know how to justify expenditures for outreach efforts, public education funding will always be a low priority. Grant money is available for distribution of safety lessons, but it is not likely to be awarded to jurisdictions that do not evaluate their programs for effectiveness and maintain data to support successfully targeted projects. North Las Vegas Fire Department is the sole exception in this example, and that city is currently using its documented public education successes to pursue funding for its children's safety village project – Northern S.T.A.R.S. Safety Village.

Lack of communication and coordinated effort between the fire departments regarding delivery of public education programs is another problem identified during this study. The local

law enforcement agencies face the same logistical issues regarding the vast size of the school district, yet they are able to cooperate with each other to put forth a cohesive public education effort in the district's classrooms. The difference may be the higher departmental value placed on working on community outreach programs. Police officers who wish to volunteer for classroom duty are fully supported from the top of their chain of command. Several law enforcement agencies also maintain Crime Prevention Specialist positions dedicated to delivering public education messages. Most of Clark County's fire departments currently put little emphasis on public education functions. Many of the line personnel treat school appearances as something annoying that they want to get over with rather than having a passion for empowering children in making safer decisions. Though it may not be possible to change an individual's beliefs about public safety education in the schools, the culture of the fire department comes from the example of its top executives and delivering safety messages must be a priority in its mission from the top down.

A final obstacle to bringing regular safety curriculum to Clark County's schools is the current restrictions on classroom time. According to the CCSD teachers who participated in the group interview session, mandatory testing now takes up so much class time that three months' worth of curriculum must be presented in two months of class time. This time constraint makes little opportunity to add anything "extra". Administrators are also responsible for the testing proficiency at each school; this can make some principals reluctant to approve a teacher's request to add a safety program into the mix. The school district does not place much emphasis on safety lessons for students, which makes CCSD similar in culture to many of the local fire departments.

This apathy toward safety education should not come as a surprise; the belief that "it can't happen to me" is a widespread concept in North American society. Many experienced first responders ride motorcycles without helmets and fail to check the batteries in their smoke alarms

even though they have seen firsthand what the results of these deficits can be. When a tragic incident happens to someone, even if the event was both predictable and preventable, the individual is counseled that “it wasn’t your fault; you didn’t mean it” and “don’t dwell on it – move on with your life”. This victim may never learn to take responsibility for his or her own actions, and may never consider the causes of the tragedy long enough to learn from it. This unfortunate trend perpetuates the “accident cycle” in this country.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The original purpose of this applied research project was to determine what would be the most effective type of public safety education program for local fire departments, police departments, and other potential partners to assist in delivering to Clark County School District's students, and to recommend the first steps toward development and implementation of such a program. This study uncovered several other problems that would hamper the successful implementation and maintenance of any new program. Therefore, these recommendations will also address correcting the conditions that would endanger a successful program launch and its continued delivery.

The first step must be to correct the poor communication between the fire departments themselves and all potential partners in the public education project. This might best be initiated by developing a coalition of capable members from each stakeholder organization, including the school district, for the purpose of cooperating in the development and initial pilot offering of the new program. The participating members must have full supervisory support if this project is to have a chance at success. A committee formed within an existing organization that already has fire department members, such as Safe Kids – Clark County or the Burn Foundation, might also serve this purpose.

The coalition's task will be to develop a comprehensive safety education program that is locally oriented and acceptable to the State of Nevada, Clark County School District, and CCSD's educators. The program will be designed around the following features: (a) Electronic distribution over the internet, (b) primary delivery by the teachers themselves with support from the partner agencies, (c) a range of risk topics designed to be delivered in multiple presentations throughout the school year, (d) access to a large variety of safety resources, (e) written and approved so that participating educators may receive continuing education credits for successfully completing the entire program, and (f) will include a professionally designed evaluation tool. A more detailed description of each item follows.

The reasoning for (a) electronic distribution over the internet is that the school district is large in both area and population. The most efficient way to make the program available to large numbers of recipients who are a great distance apart without generating inordinate logistical expenses is to make the bulk of the program available online. Electronic delivery will also enable partnering agencies to participate from a distance, at a lower cost, and without regard to the size or location of the organization. This efficiency may encourage more chief officers to support their department's participation in the program.

The second item, (b) primary delivery by the teachers themselves with support from the partner agencies, is based around the concept that firefighters and police officers are not usually professionally trained educators. Each public safety organization may have only one or two individuals who are actually qualified for this duty, and this limits the opportunity for more widespread delivery of a safety program. If the program is designed for consistent and repeated delivery by the trained educators themselves, the chance that the message will be effective is dramatically increased. Partner agencies can support the program in a number of different ways, including lesson-supporting classroom visits, online "chats" with a class, and even an award

ceremony for a class that has successfully completed the entire curriculum. NFPA's Risk Watch program was similarly designed around a small community partnership-style delivery with the professional educators handling the actual instruction, and the format proved to be a very successful one.

The third item, (c) a range of risk topics designed to be delivered in multiple presentations throughout the school year, is intended to address the top risks to children in the United States. As previously noted, unintentional injuries kill thousands of children under the age of 14 and injure many more each year (NFPA, 2010). To address these hazards, the newly designed program's topics will include motor vehicle safety; fire and burn prevention; emergency and disaster planning; choking, suffocation, and strangulation prevention; poisoning prevention (including drug awareness); falls prevention; firearms injury prevention (optional lesson); bicycle and pedestrian safety (including safe places to walk); disease prevention; and water safety. The participating educator will be able to choose the order in which to complete the modules, and the entire program will be designed to span throughout the school year.

Item (d), access to a large variety of safety resources, will involve creating directories of approved single-lesson materials. Each program module will be designed with age-appropriate course objectives, and the participating educator will be able to select from a wide variety of resources to accomplish the course objectives for each topic. Approved resources will include sections from professionally designed series such as Risk Watch, individual lesson plans from other safety-related agencies, and previously approved local curriculums such as the D.A.R.E. and McGruff programs that are already in use in local communities. Coalition members will have to work with school district personnel to have each resource correlated to the State Board of Education's standards and approved by the school district for use with this program. This researcher believes that working to correlate and receive approval for a list of safety modules all

at once should be more efficient than walking individual lesson plans through the system one at a time .

A common thread among the interviewed teachers was their perceived lack of time to deliver any lesson other than mandated curriculum. Correlating the safety lessons to the State's standards means that the safety lesson could be used to fulfill whatever benchmark it is correlated to. For example, if a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher needs to complete certain reading, math, and science benchmarks, and wants to participate in the new safety program, he or she would select the program safety resources that were correlated to the needed benchmarks. In order to add benefit to the participating educators, the course would be designed to provide continuing education credits to those who successfully complete the entire program. This is the fifth element in the list of recommended program features; (e) Written and approved so that participating educators may receive continuing education credits for successfully completing the entire program. This type of continuing education credit is known as Professional Development Units (PDE's) within the Clark County School District, and teachers are required to complete a certain number of credit hours of PDE's in order to qualify for promotions. The coalition must solicit the assistance of a qualified person within the school district's Curriculum Development Department to ensure that all requirements for course certification are met during the program's development.

The final element of this safety education program, (f) will include a professionally designed evaluation tool, will document the program's effectiveness as well as identify areas that need improvement. A participating educator must complete both pre-test and post-test exercises along with a course evaluation in order to receive the continuing education credit for the course. Any of the partnering agencies may use the data generated by this program for grant application purposes or budget justification for public education personnel. It is recommended that a

permanent “guardian” of the data be assigned in order to protect and maintain its history and availability. A standing committee tasked with overseeing each offering of the program and making updates when appropriate will also ensure its long term success.

For future researchers in the subject of delivering safety curriculum to school classrooms, there are several closing recommendations. Contacting the local school district at the beginning of the study is probably the best thing that a future researcher can do. No matter how great or successful a safety program may have been in other parts of the country, if it is not approved for use within the subject schools, it will not be implemented. Establishing partnerships with other agencies that have similar goals will also prevent duplication of effort and form a cooperative bond in a common life safety goal. Creating and consistently using evaluation tools, even though it can be difficult and time-consuming, will give the researcher’s agency a basis for grant requests and budget justification of future public education efforts.

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## APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SINGLE-RISK SAFETY LESSONS

### Fire and Burn Prevention Sources:

A to Z Teacher Stuff. *Fire safety*. [http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/Fire\\_Safety/](http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/Fire_Safety/)

Safe Kids U.S.A. *Fire and Burn Prevention*. <http://www.safekids.org/our-work/programs/fire-burn-prevention/>

Disney Educational Productions. *Safety Smart Science with Bill Nye the Science Guy: Fire*. [http://www.dep-store.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=77D63VL00&cmp=dcore\\_dep\\_psg\\_product](http://www.dep-store.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=77D63VL00&cmp=dcore_dep_psg_product)

Burn Fund. *Burn Awareness Week*. <http://www.burnfund.org/BAW/>

Burn Prevention Foundation. *Learn About Fires and Burns*. <http://learnaboutfireandburns.com/index.html>

Ask A Cop. *Fire Safety Week*. <http://teachers.askacop.org/firesafetyweek.html>

### Water Safety Sources:

Disney Educational Productions. *Wild About Safety with Timon and Pumbaa: Safety Smart in Water*. <http://www.dep-store.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=77D67VL00>

First School. *Water Safety 1 and Water & Boating Safety*. *\*This site has multiple lesson plans in all risk areas.* <http://www.first-school.ws/THEME/safety.htm>

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Sources:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety*. <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.810acae50c651189ca8e410dba046a0/>

Safe Routes to School Partnership. *Youth Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Curriculum*. <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/5638/5722>

Be-Safe.org. *Bicycle Safety*. <http://www.be-safe.org/publicsafety/me/topics/bicycle.html>

### Trip and Fall Prevention Resources:

American Red Cross. *Slips, Trips, and Falls*. [http://www.redcross.org/preparedness/educatorsmodule/EDU\\_Home\\_Safety/3-5%20Slips%20Trips%20and%20Falls.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/preparedness/educatorsmodule/EDU_Home_Safety/3-5%20Slips%20Trips%20and%20Falls.pdf)

### Poisoning Prevention:

National Safety Council. *Poisoning Prevention Educator Kit*. [http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_home/Resources/PoisonPreventionKit/Pages/PoisonPreventionEducatorKit.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/safety_home/Resources/PoisonPreventionKit/Pages/PoisonPreventionEducatorKit.aspx)

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW WITH PROGRAM MANAGER CHERYL WAGNER*****CCSD Community Liaison Interview Questions:***

- 1. Please describe your position and how it relates to the delivery of ‘outside’ curriculum to CCSD classrooms.**

*Cheryl A. Wagner, Program Manager, CCSD School-Community Partnership Program*  
*We act as a liaison to coalitions, agencies, and businesses who want to participate with our schools. We guide them in the correct steps to get their programs into the classrooms.*

- 2. In your experience, what agencies have partnered with CCSD to bring safety programs to CCSD classrooms?**

*There have been many over the years, but the most consistent ones have been Safe Kids – Clark County, Safe Community Partnership, Look Out – Kids About, the Southern Nevada Health District, and some of the Valley police departments – mostly the North Las Vegas Police Department’s Crime Prevention Specialists. The fire departments usually show up when requested, but it’s more for displaying their equipment and doing “Stop, Drop, & Roll” than any formal program.*

- 3. What programs have been delivered, and how was the program distributed?**

*Lots of one-time or random deliveries of Risk Watch, traffic safety programs, McGruff, D.A.R.E., bicycle safety sessions, and Stranger Danger – there are others, too. If you go to our website you can see many of the programs spotlighted. These programs were previously approved by the District’s Curriculum Development people and the school’s administrators, so individual teachers can request them. We regularly send out e-mails to our teachers so that they know what’s available and has been approved to use in their classrooms. We see a lot of requests related to current incidents – for example, a school where students just died in a traffic accident will use the opportunity to raise awareness of traffic safety by bringing in one of the approved traffic safety presentations.*

**4. Which programs were considered the most successful and why?**

*McGruff, Safe Routes to Schools, D.A.R.E., and some local programs in individual communities. Most successful have been the ones that have a standardized format, strong national recognition as well as the local support, teacher training to go with it, and outside funding. I guess that these are the most popular, not necessarily most successful.*

**5. Did any of the programs include either formal or informal evaluation tools?**

*I guess that would have proved the success, hmm? Evaluations have not been used very often, and I would question how valid the ones are that we have used. I don't believe that pre- and post-testing of students is very effective unless the post-testing is done longer after the lesson to show the retention.*

**6. Are any of the programs still in use today?**

*Yes, the same ones that I said were most successful. (McGruff, Safe Routes to Schools, D.A.R.E., and some local programs in individual communities). If you check our website it lists some of the more popular ongoing programs.*

**7. What are CCSD's current requirements for offering classroom programs?**

*Correlation to the State Standards for the correct age group, for safety programs that's usually the Health Standards. The Curriculum Development Division usually verifies this. The school's principal must approve the "outside" presentations as well. Some administrators are pretty strict this way, and some are flexible in how the teachers can account for their classroom time. They are the ones who are ultimately responsible, so they make the final decision. You can find all of the Nevada teaching standards on the website.*

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWS WITH FIRE DEPARTMENT PUBLIC EDUCATORS

### *Interview Questions for Public Educators*

*Captain Cedric Williams, North Las Vegas Fire Department*

*March 11, 2010*

- 1. Please describe your position within your department, including number of years with the agency and your duties both current and past.**

*I've been with North Las Vegas Fire Department for 15 ½ years. Currently, I'm a Fire Captain and also the PIO (Public Information Officer) and Community Liaison for my department. I play a major role in getting our public education programs out, and our new Public Education Specialist position answers directly to me.*

- 2. What public education programs has your agency delivered to elementary school classrooms in the past? How long has your agency been doing this?**

*We have our own "Take A Second, Protect A Child" program. We participate in October Fire Prevention month activities with our schools every year. We've worked with Risk Watch in the past, we have a Sparky Hazard House that we use. If you look at the Public Education section of our website there is a list of the programs that we have available by request.*

- 3. Are any of these still being presented currently?**

*Yes, when they are requested. We have teachers who are active participants in planning events every year, and the police work with us as well. Our website has the most current list of what we are offering right now.*

- 4. How are the programs delivered? Individual classroom? Assembly? Partners?**

*We do mostly individual classroom sessions – sometimes safety fair type settings. We have many partners; Safe Kids, the Health District, sometimes City of Las Vegas or Henderson. Depends on the program.*

**5. Which programs were deemed the most successful and why?**

*We get the most feedback on our “Take a Second, Protect a Child” program, but I think that’s because it’s targeted to current events, such as an increase in drowning incidents.*

**6. Was any type of formal or informal evaluation utilized with the programs?**

*We do keep data. We use surveys that are done at the schools, we get evaluations from the teachers, and we track burns and drowning/near drownings with our survey software.*

**7. If funding and personnel were not an issue, are there any specific programs that you would bring to your jurisdiction?**

*We would get our Northern Stars Safety Village up and running. We’ve got the land, and some of the funds, now we just have to get the rest of the money to build it! We would bring a variety of programs centering around the Safety Village for the whole valley.*

***Interview Questions for Public Educators***

***Meggan VanNess, Clark County Fire Department***

***March 13, 2010***

**1. Please describe your position within your department, including number of years with the agency and your duties both current and past.**

*I worked in the Training Division of CCFD for 4 years before promoting into the Public Education Officer position. I held the PEO spot for 3 years, and am now living in New York. CCFD has not filled the vacant PEO position, and there is very little going on right now as far as I am aware. I was a Clark County School District teacher for 5 years before joining the fire department, and I feel that that experience gave me a unique perspective when I took the Public Educator’s role over.*

**2. What public education programs has your agency delivered to elementary school classrooms in the past? How long has your agency been doing this?**

*We've operated a Safety House on Wheels, usually visiting 16 schools and 112 classrooms per year. Ended in 2008; while waiting for replacement safety house, budget cuts took funding away for operating it. Fire station visits ended in 2008 as well because the call volume had become so high that it was too difficult to get an entire uninterrupted tour in. Engine company visits are mostly reserved for special needs students by request of the teacher. We still do Fire Prevention Week, and try to visit 18 different schools each year during the October program.*

**3. Are any of these still being presented currently?**

*The only programs that I am currently aware of are given on a volunteer basis by individual fire fighters. Usually they have a child or neighbor's child in the class, and it is a specific request with no programmed curriculum. Due to budget cuts, we are pretty much on hold.*

**4. How are the programs delivered? Individual classroom? Assembly? Partners?**

*We've mostly done individual classroom sessions. Nothing going on right now – no partners, no programs.*

**5. Which programs were deemed the most successful and why?**

*I think that our Safety House on Wheels was our most consistently successful program because it used age-appropriate messages and the students were engaged in the activity; it wasn't just a lecture.*

**6. Was any type of formal or informal evaluation utilized with the programs?**

*We've tried to do evaluations, but when they were left for teachers to fill out and send in, we got very poor return rates.*

**7. If funding and personnel were not an issue, are there any specific programs that you would bring to your jurisdiction?**

*In general, I would want a program that was on-going throughout the year, covered multiple safety subjects, and provided training for the teachers.*

## APPENDIX D: GROUP INTERVIEW WITH CCSD TEACHERS

### *Agenda and Notes for Clark County Educator Group Interview*

*March 5, 2010*

#### **I. Introduction**

##### **a. Who I am**

##### **b. What this project is about**

##### **c. Tell me who you are, what you teach, & your experience with life safety.**

*“Nikki – teach 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade; participated in Risk Watch and the safety trailers from Lowes.”*

*“Vanessa – 17 yrs teaching 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades, no specific experiences with life safety education in classroom except the safety trailers.”*

*“Paige – 17 years teaching 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, no life safety education experiences.”*

*“Melissa L. – 17 years teaching Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, no experience other than the Lowes trailers and D.A.R.E program.”*

*“Autumn – school psychologist. I see fire drills a lot (laughter)”.*

*“Amy – in 9<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Did D.A.R.E. program with my 5<sup>th</sup> graders.”*

*“Melissa – administrator. Haven’t been involved with any safety programs, but my dad was a fireman.”*

*“Jill – have taught for 18 years – every grade but 1<sup>st</sup>. Same experience as everybody else.”*

*General discussion: have had visits from fire department, but don’t consider that a ‘program’ as it is more like a career demonstration. Kids love it, but it’s not a safety class. Used to take class to fire stations, but classes are too big now and fire stations too busy.*

#### **II. In your past experience, what fire and life safety programs have you yourself used or brought in to your classroom from an outside presenter?**

*In this group, nobody had brought in a specific outside presentation on their own. Most had participated in whatever Fire Prevention month activity was going on, and most had been through the Lowes/Home Safety Council trailers with their classes. A*

*few had fire fighters who were parents of their students speak to the class on career days, and they usually had a little safety talk, but no specific curriculum.*

**III. Which ones were most effective and why?**

*The programs brought by law enforcement, like D.A.R.E. and Stranger Danger (child assault prevention program). Participants felt that it was because they were well-known, well-organized, national programs with strong local backing – no matter which law enforcement agency use it, it comes out consistent.*

**IV. Did any of the programs include evaluation, whether formal or informal?**

*Only teacher evals, not for students and not to measure effectiveness.*

**V. Do you still use any of these programs – if so, how often, what grade, etc.?**

*No specific programs going on right now do to budget cuts on agencies that provide them and no classroom time to accommodate.*

**VI. What factors make adding ‘extra’ programs a challenge?**

- a. CCSD rules**
- b. Changes in State requirements**

*The CRT’s – State mandated testing because of NCLB (No Child Left Behind). So much testing that we have to get three months of curriculum into two months of time. Management resistance to safety programs is not an issue; we just don’t have time.*

**VII. What is ‘No Child Left Behind’?**

*“A joke”. “A pain in the neck.” “It’s a standard that’s measured with proficiency based testing that’s fine in theory, but doesn’t take into account the make-up of your classroom – such as language barriers or special education students (who are not in separate classrooms in Nevada).”*

**VIII. What features would make a fire and life safety education program a bigger benefit to your classroom efforts?**

*“Make it a required part of curriculum so that we are mandated to teach it.”*

*“Correlate a program to the State Standards so that we can use it to fill required slots.”*

*The group also had some more suggestions: require CPR and first aid training for all teachers; standardize the evacuation and shelter-in-place drills in Clark County (this suggestion received a round of applause from the others); CCSD needs to do a better job of letting us know what’s available.*