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“One principal I talked to said the guide is the most useful tool she received. She has it in a folder on her desk, and she pretty much picks it up daily to look at and think, ‘What did they all do in this situation, what did they do in that situation?’ It also has all of our contact information in

2019,

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For more on the PRN, visit nassp.org/prn.

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Introduction

Of all the forms of disaster, crisis, and violence that can shock a school community, gun violence can be particularly traumatic. Though statistically rare, the frequency of school shootings has increased in recent years. The scale of the incident may vary, but every school shooting takes a distinct toll on students, educators, parents, and the community. In the aftermath, many will turn to you, the principal, as a source of support and guidance, even as you seek to personally recover and process your own emotion.

While there may not be an exact return to “normal” after a shooting tragedy, you can recover and create a healthy new normal for your school. Everyone responds to the new normal in different ways—as principal, you must seek to allow your students, staff, and yourself to heal in the way that works best for you and for them to the greatest extent possible. For example, some teachers and staff are going to want to get right back into their

involvement or going off

1. Securing Support and Responding to Offers of Assistance

- A full faculty meeting, off-site if possible, should be held as soon as possible to help provide guidance to staff. This meeting will allow staff to gain a better understanding of what took place and begin to express their needs and concerns.
- Trauma-informed counselors and mental health professionals, who are trained and coordinated to provide assistance, should be on hand immediately.
- School leaders should take adequate time to vet and consider outside groups who offer to lead counseling after the event. Many organizations mean well, but you will need to make determinations on which groups will be the best fit for your school and oand



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2. Reopening the School

- The principal should be the lead decision maker and rely on a small team to support them—the district superintendent must allow the principal to make the decisions for the school and offer support when needed.
- Visibility of the principal is very important throughout the recovery process—students and staff want to see you and lean on you for support. Transparency and vulnerability are also important qualities for the principal to possess at this time, as they give others an example of how they too can be honest with their feelings and personal struggles.
- Ensure that all physical damage to school is repaired before bringing anyone back.

Consider if there need to be changes made, not just returning things to the way they were before. For example, affected classrooms may need to be repurposed for other uses if it would be triggering for students and staff to attempt to work and learn in those spaces.

Ensure that community stakeholders, parents, and staff are adequately consulted as decisions about changes to the building are made.

- Once the school is “cleared” (repaired, cleaned, no longer a crime scene, etc.), consider organizing a meeting or gathering just for staff before it reopens to the public and students. Staff need to begin to feel comfortable in their building first before they are prepared to support students and resume teaching. It will also provide a good opportunity to share updates, coordinate next steps for reopening, and listen to your staff.

You may also want to consider allowing for several teacher in-service days in

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3. Attending to the Ongoing Needs of Students and Staff

- School leaders and staff must be extremely sensitive and ensure support resources are on hand when school shootings happen elsewhere. Watching those events unfold and the surrounding news coverage can be extremely traumatizing for those who've lived through similar events.
- Consider what students may need to succeed after living through trauma, especially those who have struggled academically in the aftermath. For

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5. Listening to Student Voice

- Student voice must be heard and incorporated into the entirety of the school's recovery process. Principals should consider utilizing existing student leadership groups like Student Council to encourage and organize positive voice among students. You might also consider forming a new student group or committee to advise ongoing recovery needs.
- Make it clear to yourt alsoclear

Listening to Student Voice

Testimonial

Elizabeth Brown, former Principal, **Forest High School**, Ocala, FL



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