

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Schools At Risk of Being Labeled a Persistently Dangerous School

**Type of Executive Summary:**

- Consent     
  Action     
  Action on First Reading     
  Discussion     
  Information

**Policy Implications:**

- Constitution \_\_\_\_\_  
 General Statute # \_\_\_\_\_  
 SBE Policy # SS-A-006  
 SBE Policy Amendment  
 SBE Policy (New)  
 APA # \_\_\_\_\_  
 APA Amendment  
 APA (New)  
 Other No Child Left Behind

**Presenter(s):** Dr. Rebecca Garland (Interim Associate Superintendent, Innovation and School Transformation/Executive Director, State Board of Education) and Ms. Charlotte Hughes (Interim Director, Student Support Services)

**Description:**

According to State Board of Education policy, a “persistently dangerous school” is a public elementary, middle or secondary school or a charter school in which a total of five or more violent criminal offenses was committed per 1000 students (0.5 or more per 100 students) during each of the two most recent school years and in which the conditions that contributed to the commission of those offenses are likely to continue into another school year. Two schools, Catawba Valley High School, an alternative school in the Hickory City Schools system, and Conway Middle School, a traditional school in the Northampton County school system, were reported to have .5 or more violent criminal offenses per 100 students during each of the two most recent school years. This data reflects incidents during the 2005-06 and the 2006-07 school years, not during the 2007-08 school year.

School Safety and Climate Section consultants made on-site visits to review whether there was evidence that the conditions that contributed to the commission of those offenses are likely to continue into another school year and provide an opportunity for each school to report on plans for eliminating the conditions contributing to the violent acts. In addition, an external review team reviewed documentation and school portfolios.

**Resources:**

The Department of Public Instruction’s School Safety and Climate Section, Local Education Agencies, Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Mental Health, and external team members were used as resources in the completion of this process.

**Input Process:**

Input was received from site visitation team members. During the site review, principals, other school staff, and students met with the site review team members. The site observation documentation was presented to external team members who subsequently reviewed the school’s portfolio. Recommendations were made after a thorough review of all relevant documentation.

**Stakeholders:**

Stakeholders include students, teachers, staff, parents, the community and law enforcement agencies

**Timeline For Action:**

It is requested that the State Board of Education review the recommendations made during the July meeting.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that (1) the State Board of Education find that the conditions that contributed to the commission of the offenses at the two schools are not likely to continue into another school year and, therefore, the two schools

are not currently “persistently dangerous” and (2) the two schools be placed on probationary status and required to develop an action plan, participate in school safety training, and receive safety-audit visits during the 2008-2009 school year to assure that the conditions that contributed to the commission of the offenses do not reappear.

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Audiovisual equipment requested for the presentation:

Data Projector/Video (Videotape/DVD and/or Computer Data, Internet, Presentations-PowerPoint preferred)

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Audio Requirements (computer or other, except for PA system which is provided)

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Document Camera (for transparencies or paper documents – white paper preferred)

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Motion By: \_\_\_\_\_

Seconded By: \_\_\_\_\_

Vote: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Abstain \_\_\_\_\_

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_

Postponed \_\_\_\_\_ Revised \_\_\_\_\_

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**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Policy Manual**

**Policy Identification**

**Priority:** Healthy Students in Safe, Orderly & Caring Schools

**Category:** Safe Schools Program Guidelines

**Policy ID Number:** SS-A-006

**Policy Title:** Policy defining persistently dangerous schools

**Current Policy Date:** 06/06/2002

**Other Historical Information:**

**Statutory Reference:** 20 USCS 7912 (2002)

**Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:**

(This policy addresses Certification of Compliance with Unsafe School Choice Option Requirements as required in the *Consolidated Plan for No Child Left Behind*.)

1. The following definitions apply to this policy.
  - a. Violent criminal offenses are the following crimes as reported in the *"Report on School Crime and Violence"*:
    - Homicide
    - Assault Resulting in Serious Bodily Injury
    - Assault Involving Use of a Weapon
    - Rape
    - Sexual Offense
    - Sexual Assault
    - Kidnapping
    - Robbery with a Dangerous Weapon
    - Robbery
    - Taking Indecent Liberties with a Minor
  - b. A persistently dangerous school is a public elementary, middle or secondary school or a charter school in which a total of five or more violent criminal offenses were committed per 1000 students (0.5 or more per 100 students) during each of the two most recent school years and in which the conditions that contributed to the commission of those offenses are likely to continue into another school year.
2. Along with the annual Report on School Crime and Violence, the Superintendent for each LEA shall write and inform the State Board of Education of:
  - a. All the public schools within that LEA that have reported a total of five or more violent criminal offenses were committed per 1000 students (0.5 or more per 100 students) during the most recent school year; and
  - b. All the public schools within that LEA that have reported a total of five or more violent criminal offenses were committed per 1000 students (0.5 or more per 100 students) during each of the two most recent school years.

3. No later than June 30 of any year, the chairman of the board of directors of the nonprofit corporation that holds the charter for a charter school shall notify the State Board of Education:
  - a. Whether five or more violent criminal offenses were committed per 1000 students (0.5 or more per 100 students) in a charter school during the most recent school year; and
  - b. Whether five or more violent criminal offenses were committed per 1000 students (0.5 or more per 100 students) in a charter school during each of the two most recent school years.
4. Whenever the State Board of Education has information that five or more violent criminal offenses were committed per 1000 students (0.5 or more per 100 students) in a public elementary, middle or secondary school or a charter school during each of the two most recent school years, the State Board of Education shall provide the local board of education or the nonprofit corporation that holds the charter for the school the opportunity to report on conditions in the school and any plans it may have to eliminate the conditions that contributed to the commission of the violent criminal offenses.
5. After consideration of that report and consultation with a representative sample of local educational agencies or charter schools, the State Board of Education shall determine whether the school is a persistently dangerous school, whether the school should be placed on probation, or whether no additional interventions are necessary to protect students from violent crimes.
6. During the probationary year, the school shall implement additional strategies to protect students from violent criminal offenses and incorporate them into the Safe Schools Plan.
7. If at any time during the probationary year, the State Board of Education determines that conditions that contributed to the commission of the violent criminal offenses in the school have not been eliminated, then the State Board of Education may determine that the school is a persistently dangerous school.
8. Once the State Board has determined that a school is a persistently dangerous school, the school shall retain that designation for at least one full school year.
9. Students assigned to a school which the State Board of Education has determined to be persistently dangerous shall be allowed to attend another school in the LEA which is not designated a persistently dangerous school, provided there is such a school in the LEA which offers instruction at the student's grade level.
10. Any student who is the victim of a violent criminal offense committed against him or her while he or she was in or on the grounds of a public elementary, middle or secondary school or charter school that he or she attends shall be allowed to attend another school in the LEA, provided there is such a school in the LEA which offers instruction at the student's grade level and provided the student's choice shall not be limited to persistently dangerous schools.
11. Local school systems shall establish a process for assuring any student who has the right to transfer from a school under this policy is allowed to transfer to a school in the LEA which is not persistently dangerous. The process must be included in the system's Safe School Plan.
12. The LEA shall report each student transfer effected pursuant to this policy to the State Board of Education in its "Report on School Crime and Violence."
13. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to grant any student the right to attend a charter school, grant any student a preference in admission to a charter school or limit a student's right to transfer from a charter school.

### **Chronology of Identification of At-Risk Schools**

- December 2007 Annual Report on School Crime and Violence presented as information item to the SBE
- January 2008 Established visitation teams and prepared letter to be distributed to LEAs and charters
- March 2008 Letters distributed to LEAs and Charters
- March - April 2008 Data verification forms returned by LEAs
- April 2008 Site visits begin
- May 2008 Portfolios received and reviewed
- July 2008 Recommendation presented to SBE

## On-Site Visit Process

- Scheduled visit with the principal and assistant principal
- Observed student transitions as they entered and exited the school
- Observed students during class and lunch transitions
- Interviewed the principal, assistant principal, staff and students
- Observed classroom instruction and bathroom breaks
- Used *School and Classroom Visitation* and *Persistently Dangerous Site Visitation Documentation Forms* for documenting findings
- Reviewed-
  - Disciplinary data for current and past school year
  - School profile
  - Safe Schools Crisis Management Plan and the School Improvement Plan
  - Staff and student/parent handbooks
  - Violence and intervention strategies and programs
  - School Behavior Expectation Matrix
  - Staff Development Plan
  - Faculty Meeting Minutes
- Offered written and verbal feedback to the principal on what was observed and made recommendations for improving the portfolio

## **Portfolio Review Process**

### **Background Information**

- The site visits were conducted by teams consisting of DPI and external stakeholders.
- During the site visits, team members reviewed all available documents, data and other safety related information using the site visit document as a guide.
- School administrators were required to compile and submit a portfolio of the various documents to the School Safety & Climate Section. After the onsite review of the documents, school administrators were required to include in the portfolio any follow-up recommendations made by the review team.

### **Review Process**

- Reviewers were provided an overview of the site visit documentation procedures, the policy, the definitions of the reportable offenses, discipline data pertaining to each school and the completed site visit form.
- Portfolios were reviewed to ensure that they included all required documents and responses to recommendations.
- Review teams discussed findings with the consultant who conducted the site visit.
- Review team members made recommendations to identify the schools as:
  - All Clear
  - Probationary
  - Persistently Dangerous

**Recommended Action Plan for Identified Schools**

Each school must develop an Action Plan which includes the following:

- School Profile Sheet
- All reportable offenses and copies of the original written narrative of disciplinary reports
- Identification of measurable goals and objectives that will address the reduction and elimination of reportable offenses, indicating a timeline for completion, and who will be responsible for the implementation strategy (use format below)
- Staff development/technical assistance activities designed to address the school’s probationary status
- Evidence of meetings held to analyze reportable offense data and to establish strategies (i.e. meeting dates, agendas and minutes) that will ensure school and student safety and that all school staff, students, and parents own the problem of school safety

**Action Plan Implementation Format**

**Measurable Goals:**

Objectives	Strategies	Responsible Person	Timeline	Evaluation Method	Status

Action Plans should be submitted to the Safe Schools Section at DPI by September 15, 2008.

On-going review of the Action Plan will occur during the course of the academic year. The on-going review may include, but is not limited to, telephone conversations, email communications, and on-site visits.

## **Recommended Technical Assistance for Identified Schools**

The School Safety and Climate Section will provide technical assistance to the identified schools as follows:

- A representative from each school and central office will be required to attend a mandatory training facilitated by the School Safety and Climate Section that will focus on the reportable offense definitions, infraction coding and a review of policies and procedures associated with the reportable offenses.
- Each identified school will have two monitoring visits, one in the fall and one in the spring of the 2008-09 school year. A School Safety and Climate Section representative will provide assistance in the area of training and identification of reportable infractions.
- Each school's disciplinary data will be reviewed at the end of each semester, as opposed to the end of the year (June 30<sup>th</sup>).
- Each school will be expected to utilize its mid-year disciplinary data in order to develop proactive strategies.
- Schools will be required to attend the Statewide School Safety Conference in an effort to gain knowledge on related topics.

**Catawba Valley High School  
Hickory City Schools  
On-Site Visit**

**Background Information**

- Catawba Valley High School is an alternative school serving students in grades six through twelve who are referred from ALL school systems within Catawba County (Catawba County Schools, Hickory City Schools and Newton-Conover Schools)
- The campus is located near Lenoir-Rhyne College and is within walking distance of the Catawba County Science Center, the Hickory Art Museum, the Patrick Beaver Library, and the Frye Regional Medical Center.
- **2005-2006 Persistently Dangerous Discipline Data**  
2 Robbery without Dangerous Weapon (RO)  
Final ADM 103
- **2006-2007 Persistently Dangerous Discipline Data**  
1 Sexual Offense (SO)  
1 Robbery without Dangerous Weapon (RO)  
Final ADM 108
- **2007-2008 Persistently Dangerous Discipline Data (available in October 2008)**

**Findings from Spring 2008 Visit**

- School has a new principal and a majority of new staff.
- The school was clean and inviting with student work displayed throughout the building.
- Students and staff reported feeling safe.
- Staff interviews revealed a new vision for the school and the school culture.
- Staff indicated on-going staff development that included a plan for implementing the vision and to change the surrounding community perceptions.
- Behavior expectations were displayed in classrooms.
- In classrooms visited, students were engaged and staff monitored student behavior.
- Students were accompanied by adults to lunch and bathroom breaks.
- Staff and administration monitored student movement.

**Summary**

The new administration was placed at Catawba Valley High School to lead the staff with a new vision and to implement strategies to move the school forward. Staff members interviewed are involved in working towards improving student academics, the school culture, and the overall school climate.

**Catawba Valley High School  
Hickory City Schools  
Portfolio Review**

**Findings from Spring 2008 Portfolio Review**

- Staff and students should be trained in student-appropriate behaviors during school (student interactions/cell phone use).
- The counselor should plan regular meetings with students and schedule conferences in a timely fashion.
- The school should monitor students regarding appropriate comments towards each other.
- The school should establish procedures for cell phone usage.
- The school should monitor bus behavior with security cameras (one incident occurred on the bus).

**Summary**

Catawba Valley High School has been on the at-risk list for a second year. Changes implemented by the new administration during the 2007-08 school year have the potential to improve safety and order in the school.

**Conway Middle School  
Northampton County  
On-Site Visit**

**Background Information**

- One of two middle schools in Northampton County
- Located in Conway, North Carolina
- New principal joined the school in February 2007
- 360 enrolled students, 36 teachers
- School-wide Title I
- **2005-2006 Persistently Dangerous Discipline Data**  
3 Sexual Assaults (SA)  
Final ADM 470
- **2006-2007 Persistently Dangerous Discipline Data**  
1 Assault Involving Use of a Weapon (AW)  
2 Sexual Offense (SO)  
1 Rape (R)
- **2007-2008 Persistently Dangerous Discipline Data (Available in October 2008)**

**Findings from Spring 2008 Visit**

- School has a new principal as of February 2007.
- School was inviting and felt safe.
- No reportable offenses were recorded at the time of the visit.
- Staff and students reported that they felt safe.
- Staff and students perceived principal as a “stickler” for the rules.
- Character education was embedded in elective classes.
- Proactive measures were in place to maintain a positive climate, including:
  - New discipline referral process,
  - Interactive teaching,
  - Social group to teach appropriate social skills, and
  - Student-of-the-month recognition for positive character traits.
- Professional development on gang awareness, bullying, and National School Safety was provided.

**Summary**

The principal has made positive changes with the overall safety and climate of the school. The school staff supports the administration’s vision, and the students reported feeling safe. There is a clear focus on positive behavior and academic performance.

**Conway Middle School  
Northampton County  
Portfolio Review**

**Findings from Spring 2008 Portfolio Review**

- School should continue to implement strategies related to safety as outlined in School Improvement Plan.
- Staff should be trained to properly identify the reportable infractions.
- School should survey parents, staff, and students to determine feelings of safety at regular intervals.

**Summary**

Conway Middle School has been on the at-risk list for a second year. Changes implemented by the new administration during the 2007-08 school year and findings from the portfolio review indicate that the school is addressing safety issues.