



Center for **Educational** Innovation  
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**New Jersey Legislature Senate Education Committee and Assembly Education  
Committee, Committee Meeting-April 5, 2018  
10 AM, Committee Room 4, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey**

Testimony from Michael Kohlhagen, CEO, The Center for Educational Innovation:

First, I'd like to thank the Assembly and Senate Education Committees and especially Assemblywoman Lampitt for inviting me here today to participate in this panel.

My name is Michael Kohlhagen, CEO of the Center for Educational Innovation. I come to you with over 25 years of experience in urban and suburban schools with an organization of 33 years working to support schools and school leaders across the country. I thank you for the opportunity to share my recommendations. While we know you are examining (1) school safety planning, practice and training mandates, as well as (2) physical plant, infrastructure and technology, in my limited time today, I'd like to highlight two key areas in (3) social emotional wellness and resiliency, which is one of our strengths as a support organization.

I have aligned our recommendations with your current regulations and practice as follows:

Recommendations from 2013 NJ School Security Task Force Report, focusing on Issue #2, #8 & #9:

8. We recommend that school districts engage in activities aimed at promoting a positive school climate and establishing relationships that foster ongoing communication among staff and students.

*We recommend creating a framework to build resiliency and social emotional wellness by which a school may pursue a safe and healthy learning community. Though in recent years the restorative practice may have been reactive, today we are recommending a proactive restorative culture with:*

- *Code of conduct that is more restorative than punitive*
- *Tools to measure students' social emotional well-being*
- *Implementing strategies such as restorative circles, peer mediation, and youth courts as a supportive school discipline practice*

Issue #2, item 9 states:

9. We recommend that school districts establish behavioral threat assessment teams to identify potential at-risk students and to provide resources to prevent potential violent incidents to prevent targeted violence.”



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We recommend expanding two existing policies and practices in the following innovate ways:  
These recommendations address acknowledged gaps and emerging needs; all warrant further discussion.

First,

- *Expand the data currently collected in the NJ DOE culture and climate survey to include items that measure student social and emotional needs*

Second,

- *Modeled after the current child abuse mandates, we recommend establishing a similar mandated protocol to identify and respond to students who demonstrate social and emotional distress. The mandated protocol would include professional development to support school staff.*

We are committed to helping you strengthen systems to support and protect all of the students and adults in our school communities, ensuring our schools are the safe havens they were meant to be.

Respectfully submitted,  
Michael Kohlhausen, CEO  
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