



B E N D
LA PINE

S C H O O L S

After Action Review and Safety Improvement Plan

Pilot Butte Middle School Handgun Incident - October 21, 2024

Report Released January 23, 2025



Introduction

The October 21, 2024, incident at Pilot Butte Middle School involving a student bringing a loaded handgun to school was a critical safety threat, with identified victims who experienced harm and a school community that has undergone a shared traumatic experience. Not to minimize the gravity of the incident or its impact on students, staff and families, but the outcome was the best we could hope for. This was due to the student's decision to approach a trusted teacher, and the calm, decisive response of that teacher, the SRO on campus, the principal and others.

This report is the culmination of a thorough review and analysis of the incident and response, with input from District and Pilot Butte leaders and staff, as well as our partners with Bend Police Department. The intent of this after-action review is to identify what worked well and where we can improve in the following areas:

- Safety preparedness and planning
- Incident response practices
- Collaboration with law enforcement and the juvenile justice system
- Coordination and information sharing
- Communication strategies
- Post-incident support

For something like this, it's important to analyze and correct oversights, errors or weaknesses in our safety system, from how we prepare and respond to how we follow through after the initial incident is over. It's just as important – and perhaps more so with this incident – to examine and learn from everything that went right and served to circumvent a potentially tragic outcome to this event.

Our commitment is to learn from this incident and strengthen our safety systems; use this experience to better prepare our schools and our system as a whole for future safety incidents; strengthen our collaboration with key community partners; and improve public awareness and understanding of the issues presented here.

Dr. Steven Cook, Superintendent
Bend-La Pine Schools

Incident Overview

On October 21, 2024, Pilot Butte Middle School experienced an active threat incident involving a student with a loaded handgun on campus. At 10:20 AM, the 7th grade student self-reported to a trusted staff member that they were in possession of a loaded handgun on their person. Within two minutes, the handgun and student were secured by the School Principal and School Resource Officer. Following an interview with the student and search of the student's property, the School Resource Officer determined the student was working independently and that there was no further threat to campus safety.

The school was not placed in a Hold, Secure or Lockdown – among the Standard Response Protocols available in our district. This school-level administrative decision was made in partnership with the School Resource Officer because of the timeliness in containing the initial threat and their ability to determine there were no further threats to school safety.

The Bend-La Pine Schools' Incident Command Team convened at Pilot Butte Middle School and, in partnership with the Bend Police Department, immediately began gathering information and drafting communications. Staff were informed of the incident in person by members of the Incident Command Team. Following staff notification, the district shared a message to all Bend-La Pine families and the media. A staff standup meeting was held at the end of the school day and the following morning to discuss the incident and available resources with staff.

Following the incident, the District Safety Team invited Pilot Butte administration and the Bend Police Department to share their perspectives and feedback with the District's executive leadership and other participating departments. The information in this report captures the recommendations and feedback gathered from the after-action meeting, after-action survey, and through various discussions with stakeholders.

Historically, Bend-La Pine Schools has maintained safe and secure campuses throughout the district. In 2021 following Senate Bill 554, Bend-La Pine Schools adopted a policy prohibiting firearms on all school grounds. The district has a zero-tolerance policy toward firearms and weapons for students. This was the first known targeted threat by a student in the Bend-La Pine School District with a loaded firearm on campus intending to cause harm to students and the wider school community.

Strengths

Pre-Incident Preparedness and Planning

- The active threat situation was averted by a trusting relationship between the student and a staff member from the prior school year. This trusting relationship allowed the student intending to cause harm to feel comfortable in coming forward and asking for help.
- Two weeks prior to this incident, an officer was added to the Bend Police Department School Resource Officer Team and placed at Pilot Butte Middle School. (Previously, PBMS shared an SRO with Mountain View High School and several other schools.) This was a data-driven decision made in partnership with District Administration and Bend Police Department leadership based on the number of calls for service over past school years.
- There are multiple data points available to staff to gain awareness concerning student behavior. Pilot Butte Middle School has a Student Threat Assessment Team that conducts threat assessments and reviews prior assessments each Wednesday. Students annually complete the Youth Truth survey and share their feelings about the school climate. Counseling services are available on-site for students.
- Administration had a strong rapport with the staff member prior to the incident. This allowed for the Principal to infer something was abnormal and urgent when the staff member called for assistance.
- The school has an overall positive association with law enforcement in the school. The positive SRO relationship has created an environment where students and staff are accustomed to law enforcement presence at PBMS, including multiple officers on campus at any given time.

Law Enforcement Response and School Incident Response

- The staff member recognized abnormal behavior in the student and responded to the potential severity of the threat.
- The staff member alerted school administration and law enforcement in a manner that prevented escalation of the incident.
- The School Resource Officer responded immediately and requested additional Bend Police support.
- The SRO immediately escorted the student to a secure campus location, accompanied by school administration. It was determined that there was no further threat to school safety and therefore no need for an emergency protocol such as Lockdown or Secure.

Emergency Coordination & Partner Information Sharing

- Bend-La Pine Schools district safety personnel and other district administrators responded directly to the school to lead the incident response. Some district staff were able to assist Pilot Butte administrators with other duties, including student supervision, allowing school administrators to focus on partnering with law enforcement and the Incident Command Team.

- The team worked in collaboration with the Bend Police Department Communications Manager and a Lieutenant for the remainder of the school day to gather information and draft communications.

Public Information and Communications Strategy

- The timeliness in containing the threat (under two minutes) allowed for the school day to continue as usual and did not disrupt the student learning environment.
- The Bend Police Department provided consistent updates to the Incident Command Team. This allowed for accurate communication to be sent to families and the media.
- The Incident Command Team received feedback that the decision to notify staff in-person was well received. This also allowed for school staff to take extra time to process the news away from their students.
- Bend-La Pine Schools' communication to families provided as much information as possible without compromising the integrity of the Bend Police Department criminal investigation.

Post-Incident Support

- The District Crisis Response Team was available for staff and students to provide resources and counseling support for the remainder of the week following the incident.
- Staff were provided with FAQs and messages they could share with students the following day after the incident.
- District staff members provided ongoing on-site support to PBMS administration in the days following the incident.

Growth Opportunities

Law Enforcement Response and School Incident Response

- Although the school did not activate an emergency response protocol in response to the threat, there was an opportunity to use the Hold protocol while the student was being interviewed to confirm the student was working independently. This would have minimized student movement and served as a more secure posture while the Incident Command Team gathered information.

Emergency Coordination & Partner Information Sharing

- Bend-La Pine Schools staff was unfamiliar with law enforcement's notification process for targeted victims and the adjudication process for minors. This resulted in some confusion for families of targeted students, as well as for school staff on the appropriate next steps to support victims.
- There were inconsistencies in the timing of law enforcement notifying families directly impacted by the actions of the student (via the evidence collected). School and district officials received formal notice of these details a couple of days after families were notified.
- Student interviews were conducted at the school, creating a noticeable police presence on campus in the days following the incident. This raised questions and concerns among parents.

Public Information and Communications Strategy

- There is an opportunity to consider the timeliness and order of communications being shared with families. If law enforcement is planning to publicly release details of a school safety incident, the District should try to notify affected families prior to wide public release of information.
- The communications team working on drafting messages about a safety incident should exercise control over internal editing access to the documents and how collaborators suggest edits and additions. It's important to have an orderly process to track message changes when a group of collaborators is working on a document simultaneously.
- In providing a safety incident web page to share details of an event, it's best practice to regularly update the information in the hours and days following the initial incident. New information won't always be readily available, but the communications team should strive to note what is known, what is not yet known, and when new information is expected to be released from the investigative process.
- Following a major safety incident, the District should ensure that multilingual staff are present in the school's main office to help staff answer phone calls from multilingual family members.

- Not all staff were notified of the incident in-person. They received an email at the end of the day. Strategies are needed to include all individuals working in the school (those on-site, part-time, non-staff, and those who are off site).

Post-Incident Support

- The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debrief for administration occurred three weeks after the incident. Administration should be provided with more timely and ongoing mental health support following such an incident.
- The school district has the opportunity to work more closely with the district attorney's office around the legal procedures and information sharing that follows an incident and continues throughout the post-incident legal process.
- Crisis Response Team spaces for staff and students need to be equipped with all necessary resources to support those seeking help. A checklist of commonly needed items would be helpful for those organizing and staffing such spaces.
- For community members who have questions and concerns about the incident, providing a dedicated method for collecting and responding to this feedback is preferable.
- It's important to ensure that school administrators, office staff and other school-based staff are familiar with how information is being shared on the incident, how feedback is being collected, and where to direct external audiences for updates or to ask questions.
- School administration must be equipped to support targeted students with safety plans, and to provide timely answers to families that have questions about legal proceedings or district policy and procedure around student discipline.

Improvement Plan

Area of Improvement	Corrective Action
Strengthen situational awareness of school threats	Encourage students to use the Safe Oregon Tip Line (via their First Step iPad app) to anonymously report any concerning behavior or rumors. Engage in discussions with students about reporting concerns to a trusted adult or staff member.
Increase emergency protocol training opportunities for staff	Develop a standardized system to account for all staff being trained in Standard Response Protocols. Continue to offer training to schools as requested for SRP, de-escalation, etc.
Develop best practices for information sharing regarding targeted students	Bend-La Pine Schools will partner with local law enforcement to better understand the order of notifying families and school staff when students have been targeted by a threat. The district will seek clarity on what is allowed to be shared and with who. When possible, the district will include a note in communications that all victims and families have been notified to reduce ambiguity for the community.
Develop a standard approach to conducting student interviews following a school threat	Bend-La Pine Schools will partner with local law enforcement and the DA's Victim's Assistance Program to provide trauma-informed spaces for student interviews relating to school threat investigations. Interviews may take place at the police department and/or in a scheduled manner at the school site.
Review timeliness and order of family communications related to school threats	To the extent practicable, draft templated and pre-translated messages that will expedite the process of notifying families of a school threat.
Establish clear feedback mechanisms for questions/comments following an incident	Provide staff with one method for collecting and responding to public feedback.
Provide school administration with ongoing mental health, legal, and administrative support following an incident	Partner with Student Services' Crisis Response Team to provide timely administrator mental health support, separate from the all-staff CISM debrief. Ensure there is a district level leader liaison to work with the DA's office, so the school administration is not burdened with that task.

Appendix

1. Question (Safety Programs Implementation):

How does Bend-La Pine Schools (BLS) decide what safety and emergency management policies, protocols, equipment, and technology are best to implement in keeping schools safe?

Background:

Emergency management and safety best practices across the country utilize a hazard analysis methodology in determining how resources should be allocated for preventing potential hazards. Evaluating hazards includes an analysis of the history, probability, and vulnerability factors for each potential hazard our schools and community may face.

While the District plans for all hazards, we recognize that active shooter situations pose a primary concern around school safety. Statistically, on a hazards analysis chart, the probability of an active shooter event occurring at one of our schools is very low. However, if one were to take place, the outcomes would be catastrophic.

Bend-La Pine has developed and maintains a comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that identifies potential hazards in the region, analyzes those hazards, and utilizes planning and mitigation strategies to prevent, protect, respond, and recover from any emergency incidents caused by hazards. The District utilizes an “all-hazards” approach to planning and responding to emergency incidents.

Conclusions:

The following criteria are considered when evaluating what safety-related programs, equipment, or technology to implement:

1. Hazard analysis feedback to make data-driven decisions on safety related programs, protocols, equipment, and technology by taking into account the probability weighted over the vulnerability and level of catastrophe the hazard may cause.
2. An awareness of the role that technology plays in supporting schools in maintaining a safe environment, as well as the potential false sense of security that technology may provide, in turn hindering the actions staff and students take during an emergency incident.
3. Weighing the initial funding costs of new technology, equipment, or facility upgrade; ongoing funding costs for any daily operations or maintenance of the technology, equipment, facility upgrade; and any personnel (FTE) costs associated with implementing, operating, and maintaining a safety technology or equipment solution for all schools in the district.

Recommendation:

Bend-La Pine Schools will continue to work collaboratively with local law enforcement organizations, other school districts, the Central Oregon Safe Schools Alliance, and our community partners on a

continuous basis to evaluate best practices, protocols, equipment, and technology available to support keeping our schools safe.

2. Question (Metal/Gun Detectors):

In light of the recent incident at Pilot Butte Middle Schools and active shooter incidents at schools nationwide, is Bend-La Pine Schools planning on installing metal or gun detectors?

Background:

In general, at schools nationwide, metal detectors (gun detectors) are the exception, not the rule, as a best practice resource for school safety. While they are used at some larger urban districts with a history of chronic weapons offenses, there is little to no evidence that metal detectors can “guarantee” that a firearm or weapon will not be brought onto a school campus.

Discussion points that need to be considered before implementing metal detectors as a safety measure at schools include:

- Will metal detectors stop gun violence from taking place outside of the school on school grounds (before a student goes through the metal detector)?
- How do we prevent a student from getting on a school bus with a firearm before they reach the metal detector?
- How many staff will it take to monitor metal detectors?
- How would we stop someone from entering the school with a firearm outside of the main entrance where the metal detectors are located?
- How will the metal detectors be funded?
- How will the ongoing costs to maintain the metal detectors be funded (repairs, calibration, replacement)?

Metal/Gun Detector Resources:

[National School Safety and Security Services - School Metal Detectors Information Paper](#)

Conclusions:

The use of metal detectors as a safety measure in schools is extremely resource intensive. Emergency management and safety best practices across the nation utilize a hazard analysis methodology in determining how resources should be allocated for preventing potential hazards, such as firearms on school grounds. Evaluating hazards includes an analysis of the history, probability, and vulnerability factors related to the potential that a firearm is brought onto a school campus.

Bend-La Pine Schools worked with Bend Police to review data on the number of juvenile weapons (firearms and other weapons like knives) charges in the city of Bend over the past five years, 2020 - 2024. In that time span, there were only three arrests of juveniles, under the age of 18, that involved a firearm, and only one of those occurred at a school, the October 2024 Pilot Butte Middle School incident. Two other incidents of juveniles with firearms took place outside of school property at a local

business, and all other incidents in the last five years of juveniles with a “weapon” involve weapons other than firearms, usually involving a student with a pocket-sized folding knife.

When considering data on firearms and other weapons used by our student-aged population in the district, the history, probability, and vulnerability analysis provides us with data to show that metal detectors are not necessarily the best resource to prevent firearm-related incidents in our community.

Recommendation:

Bend-La Pine Schools will continue to work with partner agencies and advocacy groups to provide gun safes/locks to community members, share information on safe gun storage, and monitor juvenile weapons trends within the district boundaries.

3. Question (Emergency Protocols):

Why didn’t Pilot Butte Middle School go into a Lockdown or other trained Standard Response Protocol for this firearm incident?

Background:

Bend-La Pine Schools has adopted and trains staff and students to the I Luv U Guys Foundation’s [Standard Response Protocols \(SRP\)](#), which include five emergency protocols: Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter. The SRP emergency response program is utilized in a large percentage of schools across the country, and almost exclusively in all schools in Oregon. The SRP is easy to understand and easy to implement as best practice protocols during emergency situations.

The SRP provides a uniform, planned, and practiced response to any incident, and is action-based, flexible, and easy to learn. The protocols are age-appropriate and specific to support the emergency actions of all students and staff across the K-12 education system. The SRP provides a data-proven way to respond to various emergency situations in the K-12 school environment. When training staff and students to the protocols in the district, we also train to ensure all staff, students, and community members are empowered in taking appropriate actions to keep themselves and others safe. We discuss with staff and students the constant decision-making process that should be utilized during emergencies, and to raise and maintain situational awareness at all times when implementing Standard Response Protocols.

Conclusions:

If a staff member or SRO had decided to place PBMS into a Lockdown or Hold protocol during this firearm incident, it would have been consistent with SRP protocols. However, given the unique circumstances of this incident, it was also appropriate to not go into a Lockdown or Hold.

No two situations or scenarios will happen in the same way, and regardless of how much experience or practice one has in responding to emergency situations, the only guarantee that can be made is that the situation will never unfold as planned or expected. In the PBMS incident, the staff and SRO had control

of the situation, student, and weapon in under two minutes, and had gathered enough information in that time frame to make the decision to not activate a Lockdown or other emergency protocol.

With the information they had at the time, not going into an emergency protocol allowed for very little disruption to the learning environment for students and staff. It provided the district and school administrators valuable time to work together with law enforcement to systematically inform the PBMS staff what had taken place, complete their initial investigation into what had taken place, and prepare communication and support resources for students, staff, and families before the end of the school day. If the school would have gone into a Lockdown, it would have triggered a different response which would have made the situation more challenging to handle.

Recommendation:

Bend-La Pine Schools will continue to develop training programs to ensure all staff and students understand the Standard Response Protocols and how to use them as guidelines for reacting to various emergency incidents.

4. Question (Emergency Panic Alarms):

Why hasn't Bend-La Pine Schools purchased wireless emergency panic alarms for staff with the funding through 2023 Legislature?

Background:

There is a [Wireless Panic Alarm Grant](#) available for Oregon school districts to apply for in the 2023-2025 biennium budget with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). This grant opportunity was developed in part by Rep. Emerson Levy, of Bend, to provide a one-time reimbursement of \$2,000 per school in the district to purchase wireless panic alarm systems. According to the grant information from ODE, the intent of the wireless panic alarm system is that a teacher or other staff member can activate an alarm immediately upon observation of an incident that requires emergency response so that both the emergency responders are notified and the whole school can respond simultaneously.

Bend-La Pine Schools currently utilizes a package of safety-related technology through the nationwide vendor, Raptor Technologies. The district uses Raptor's visitor and volunteer management system, as well as behavioral threat assessment and early intervention software. The district has done research on purchasing and implementing Raptor's emergency management system software that includes a wireless panic alarm function, which meets the ODE grant requirements; incident command and communication functions for managing emergency incidents; student reunification functions; and drill management functions.

Conclusions:

Bend-La Pine Schools reviewed the funding made available for Oregon schools through Oregon House Bill 5014 in 2023, which provides one-time funding of \$2,000 per school through ODE grants. The funding from this grant is insufficient to meet the needs of implementing a wireless panic alarm system.

The one-time funding is significantly lower than the actual costs of implementation, and there is no recurring funding through the grant for the annual operational costs of a panic alarm system.

Recommendation:

The BLS safety department has conducted research and participated in numerous vendor product reviews of panic alarm and emergency management software systems. An emergency management software system that includes the capability to activate an alert system by staff would be beneficial to the district.

5. Question (Artificial Intelligence Cameras):

Does Bend-La Pine Schools plan on using AI cameras or other types of cameras or AI-based solutions to help keep schools safe?

Background:

Some schools across the country are purchasing artificial intelligence camera gun-detection software in place of traditional metal or gun detectors. One company called ZeroEyes is promoting their product to school districts nationwide and lobbying state and federal legislators to include language in school-related legislation that promotes the use of AI gun detection software in schools. The software is being used in hospitals, sports arenas, malls, and schools. The software is designed to interact with current video surveillance systems, and the video feeds are fed to AI models programmed to detect firearms. If a firearm is detected, an employee at ZeroEyes' 24-hour operation center gets an alert and determines the accuracy of the detection. The company then alerts school administrators and law enforcement officers of the situation.

Conclusions:

Bend-La Pine Schools has a camera placement standard for our facilities and utilizes cameras in our schools according to the camera placement standards (based on national best practices for schools). Our experience with cameras in the district shows that they are utilized as a reactive tool to investigate an incident after it takes place. Cameras could serve as a deterrent to unsafe behavior, but historical incidents show that students know there are cameras in schools and still carry out unsafe behaviors such as fighting or vaping, and even take out their own mobile devices to record themselves conducting these behaviors.

As with any of the other safety-related technologies available to school districts, there is a significant initial and recurring funding obligation for school districts to overcome when considering implementing a technology that enhances physical safety measures in schools. Receiving an alert as soon as a weapon is identified and preventing someone from using a weapon to harm others is part of the equation that needs to be taken into consideration when deciding how to utilize our limited financial and staffing resources to create the best proactive safety programs and protocols in our schools.

Some critics of new safety technology in schools are concerned that schools need to invest limited resources in proactive programs that identify and prevent student safety concerns like bullying, fighting, verbal aggression, teen suicide, and mental health issues that typically are the leading causes of more violent acts such as shootings and use of weapons on school campuses. School safety experts believe that the addition of new technology to support safety programs in schools should be based on evidence and not as a reflex to tragic events elsewhere.

Recommendation:

As with other safety-related technology, there is the potential for cameras to be utilized in a more proactive manner, to monitor behavior or to use AI-based software to send notifications to staff when activated. The potential use of AI software for cameras would be considered utilizing the hazard analysis methodology. As the use of AI camera software technology is integrated into schools, the district will continue to review and consider it as a potential resource to include in our safety programs.