

School Safety is Everyone's Business  
Jean Skorapa, RSU5 Superintendent

Maine with all its beauty is an idyllic place to raise a family. Our schools are committed to providing an exceptional education in a safe, nurturing environment for all children. Yet, since the beginning of this school year several schools in Maine have been subject to threats of violence, including RSU 5. Even in an idyllic state such as Maine, with all its beauty, schools are not immune.

Our schools spend a great deal of time putting measures in place to prevent school violence. We know that school violence can be prevented by building a school community where all children are engaged and feel a sense of belonging. In RSU 5 this is done through the Responsive Classroom approach, restorative practices, and advisory programs. We work diligently to ensure a safe physical environment by ensuring our facilities are secured and all life-safety equipment is in optimal working order. We create and practice safety plans for the “what if” scenarios, while being ever cognizant of children’s developmental needs. In addition, we look for warning signs of possibly harmful behavior and encourage students, staff, and the community that if you “see something” to “say something.”

Although our schools do much to prevent violence from occurring, a threat of violence can cause confusion and/or anxiety for students. This may manifest in a variety of ways such as disruption in sleep, an inability to concentrate, or school avoidance. Some recommendations from the National Association of School Psychologists to support children include:

- Reassuring them they are safe
- Validating their feelings
- Making time to talk
- Keeping explanations developmental appropriate
- Reviewing safety procedures
- Observing their emotional state
- Limiting access to television and social media
- Correcting misinformation
- Maintaining a normal routine
- Talking about steps they can make to make a positive difference

Maine with all its beauty is an idyllic place to raise a family... Let’s work together to ensure our schools continue to be safe because school safety is *everyone’s* business. If you see something, say something.