

# Paying Attention to Both the Left and the Right of Bang

By Laura Black, Illinois School and Campus Safety Program Coordinator

Sometimes words can be difficult. In the wake of tragic events, they can seem lacking. But words can also be helpful. We can engage in the difficult conversations, the ones where we look at tragedy and ask “what can be done to keep this from happening again?” Although these conversations may be reactionary, they should focus on both proactive and reactive measures.

In considering being proactive and reactive, we are essentially discussing both the left and right of bang. Using the concept from [Left of Bang](#) by Patrick Van Horne and Jason Riley, if bang represents the moment an active threat incident occurs on a timeline, left of bang includes proactive, preventive measures that may have preempted the bang, and right of bang includes the reactive, responsive measures set up to stop an event already unfolding. Both left and right are important in that one may prevent an incident from occurring and one may mitigate the losses in the event an incident does occur.

## Staying Left of Bang

Proactive measures that can reduce the likelihood of student or employee-based active threat incidents in schools include behavioral threat assessment teams, behavioral intervention teams, and building a positive school/workplace climate.

Both behavioral threat assessment and behavioral intervention teams focus on assessing and addressing troubling behavior in an attempt to intervene early before troubling behavior can potentially manifest into a critical incident.

Additionally, having a positive school/workplace climate where students are engaged and bullying is limited also reduces the likelihood that a student or employee will continue down a path towards violence.

## Preparing for Right of Bang

Unfortunately, all the proactive measures a school or campus can take still can't guarantee an active threat incident won't happen there. Take, for example, the shooting at Rancho Tehama Elementary School. No amount of behavioral threat assessment, behavioral intervention, or positive climate efforts by the school could have prevented Kevin Neal's attack because he was not a student, the parent of a student, an employee, etc. Instead, the school's efforts towards having reactive measures in place and the actions of brave staff members stopped the shooter from infiltrating the school.

Some reactive measures that can



mitigate injuries and loss of life during an active threat incident include emergency operations plans, school safety technology, Stop the Bleed training, and Active Threat Response Training.

Having a quality emergency operations plan (EOP) in place and staff well versed and exercised in the plan will help ensure staff respond appropriately and effectively the moment an active event starts.

In addition to having an EOP, utilizing the safety technology the school has in place is a reactive measure that can help prevent an active assailant from accessing rooms and sections of the building(s).

Another reactive measure is to have taken Active Threat Response Training

so that if a school finds itself in a right of bang situation, law enforcement, first responders, school administration/staff, and even students know how to respond. [Click here](#) for a list of Active Threat Response Training Resources compiled by The National Center for Campus Public Safety.

## “Left of Bang” Resources

The following topical areas on the Illinois School and Campus Safety Resource Center website include information that would be considered “left of bang.”

- [K-12 Behavioral Threat Assessment](#)
  - [Higher Ed Behavioral Threat Assessment](#)
  - [K-12 Health and Wellness](#) (including Climate and Mental Health)
  - [Higher Ed Health and Wellness](#) (including Climate and Mental Health)
  - [K-12 Bullying](#)
  - [Higher Ed Bullying](#)
- Additionally, consider viewing:
- [K-12 School Violence](#)
  - [Higher Ed Campus Violence](#)

## “Right of Bang” Resources

The following topical areas on the Illinois School and Campus Safety Resource Center website include information that would be considered “right of bang.”

- [Emergency Operations Plans](#)
  - [Stop The Bleed](#)
  - [Creating MOUs](#)
  - [School Safety Technology](#)
- Additionally, consider viewing:
- [K-12 School Violence](#)
  - [Higher Ed Campus Violence](#)