

**READING, WRITING, AND READINESS:  
ASSESSING RHODE ISLAND'S SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS  
CONGRESSMAN JIM LANGEVIN  
FEBRUARY 2, 2006**

**SUMMARY:**

Every school year, we hear countless tales of students who bring guns into classrooms, natural disasters that require the evacuation of our schools, and damaging fires that threaten our places of learning. Each of these tragedies reminds us that our schools remain vulnerable. To protect our students and educators, our nation must continue to improve our disaster preparedness and emergency response efforts to ensure an organized response in the event of a crisis.

Congressman Jim Langevin, in conjunction with the House Homeland Security Committee, mailed a 32 question survey to every public school and school district in Rhode Island's Second Congressional District to assess their preparedness in November 2005.

- Of 234 surveys mailed, 39 principals and superintendents responded, from:
  - 17 elementary schools
  - 7 middle schools/junior high schools
  - 8 high schools
  - 2 schools with other combinations of grades
  - 5 school districts
- Both small and large schools from the Second District responded; size ranged from 137 students to 1,960 students with an average school size of 580 students.
- Five school districts ranging in size from 1,600 to 4,600 students responded; average district size was 3,168 students.
- 53% of respondents said their schools are suburban.
- 23% represent urban schools and school districts.
- 23% percent represent rural schools and school districts.

The responses show that while most schools have developed a plan to protect their students, faculty, and staff, many schools have not adequately rehearsed their plans, and nearly a quarter of schools are unsure who to ask for additional assistance. With the help of the survey results, Congressman Langevin is working to provide schools with access to the resources they need to keep our schools safe.

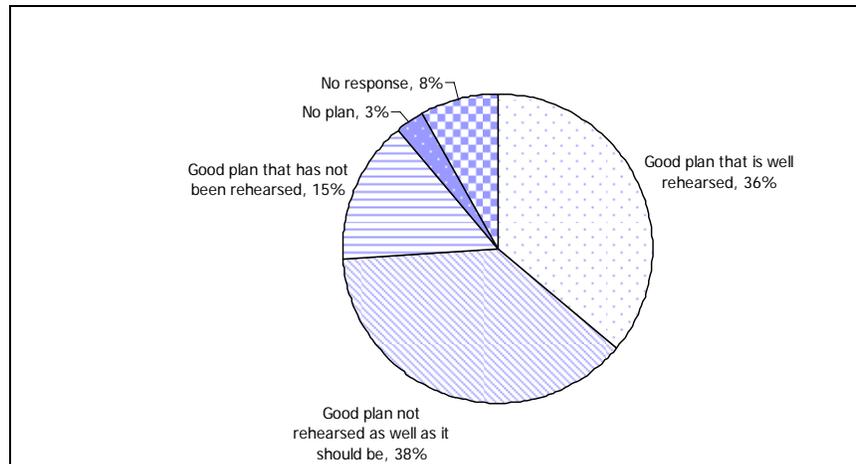
**KEYS TO EMERGENCY READINESS**

- Conduct a threat assessment, and ensure that emergency plans meet these threats.
- Notify parents of emergency plans.
- Frequently rehearse the plan, and make sure that it is up to date.
- Consider all funding options, including federal, state and local funding sources and free or low-cost supplies and training.
- Ensure that needs of all students and teachers are met before, during, and after an emergency.
- Planning materials to help schools and districts prepare for a variety of scenarios are available on Congressman Langevin's web site, [www.house.gov/langevin](http://www.house.gov/langevin)

## SURVEY FINDINGS:

- 97% have developed an “all-hazards” emergency plan, as advised by the Federal Department of Education.
- More than 55% indicate that their state of preparedness is not as well rehearsed as they would prefer, while 36% of schools believe their plan has been properly rehearsed.

Figure 1: “State of Emergency Plan Rehearsal”



- Nearly 80% have plans to transport students away from the school if necessary.
- Only 26% are prepared to feed and shelter students for several days. Those who are capable of providing for students obtain supplies directly from the state or the school districts.
- 80% have a plan to incorporate mental health counselors to students, faculty, and staff in the days after an emergency.
- While 31% “frequently” (more than once a year) engage in a joint review of the evacuation plan, over 65% report that teachers and administrators “occasionally” (once a year) or “never” engage in a review of the school’s evacuation plan.
- Only 54% report that their employees receive ongoing professional development training on school security and emergency preparedness issues.
- Two-thirds report that they have never conducted a threat assessment, even though it was advised by the Department of Education and US Secret Service.
- Though 69% report relying on state and local police, firefighters, and other emergency responders in developing their emergency plans, 44% stated either that their school was “not included” or they “did not know” if the school was included in the city or county’s emergency response plan.

To view the entire Rhode Island *Reading, Writing, and Readiness* report, please log onto [www.house.gov/langevin](http://www.house.gov/langevin)