

FROM ROOKIE TO REALITY

Shoreline Elementary is a small school, with 720 students, serving kindergarten through fifth grade. Comparatively speaking, it has a much smaller student population than the other 18 schools in the district.

Shoreline opened in 1970 and has maintained a reputation as one of the most desirable schools in the area. There have been only a few reported incidences of behavioral problems, and parents are actively involved in the parent volunteer program. They take an active role in their children's education and are generally supportive of the school's various educational programs.

You were hired as an assistant principal at another school in the district, but because of the illness of Shoreline's principal, you have been asked to assume the role of interim principal at Shoreline for the remainder of the school year. The district does not believe that the former principal will return to work.

The transition for you has been relatively smooth. You simply had to accept and adjust to the additional responsibilities of the job. Your confidence, in part, comes from the training you received from Rick King, who is the principal at the school of your previous employment. He spent a great deal of time with you and shared the knowledge and skills he learned from watching other successful administrators in the district.

You are confident that the title *interim* will be removed if you meet or exceed the superintendent's expectations. You concentrate on being highly visible, and your hands-on approach to problem solving is received well by the

staff and the community. You visit each classroom on a daily basis, carry a walkie-talkie, welcome students every morning, and respond quickly to the concerns of the parents and staff.

The Problem

After you had been at Shoreline for only two weeks, you heard that Rick King had to evacuate the students because a pipe bomb had been placed outside one of the classrooms. The bomb squad had to be summoned, and what turned out to be a homemade bomb was defused. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

This incident was covered extensively by the radio and television stations and the local newspapers. The concern that this type of event might recur in the district was at the forefront of every administrator's mind.

Shortly after the incident at Rick's school and 20 minutes before the beginning of school at your site, you walked out in front of the school to welcome the students and parents. You noticed a fourth-grade student running toward you with an adult whom you believed to be his mother. The two shouted in your direction and pointed at an object that was lying on the sidewalk just across the street. After you calmed the child and the parent down, you walked across the street in an effort to get a better look at the object.

You walked quickly to where the object was located and noticed that it was near the crosswalk and appeared to be made of metal. Each end was wrapped with tape. You immediately assumed that it was another homemade explosive device similar to the one at Rick's school.

Case Analysis Framework

1. Summarize the case.
2. Identify the problem in a single sentence.
3. Select specific information from the case and categorize it according to people, place, or program.
4. Review and prioritize the information.
5. Refer to the data in each category to solve the problem identified in the case and to respond to the case study questions.

Questions to Research and Consider

1. What is the first thing you should do?
2. What criteria, if any, would you use in deciding whether or not to evacuate the school building?

3. Would you evacuate the entire school or just the buildings closest to the bomb?
4. List the steps you would take in informing the parents of what happened at your school.
5. Do you feel that school administrators should be required to receive training in bomb threat safety?
6. What type of follow-up intervention and in-service training should you provide for your staff?
7. What are the limitations and the liabilities for school administrators in a situation like this?
8. Is there any way that an administrator can reduce the amount of media coverage for an event like this?
9. What type of report would you be expected to forward to the district office regarding this incident?
10. When should a site administrator notify the superintendent regarding problems at the school site? List some examples.

Developing Your Leadership Expertise: ISLLC Standards 3, 4, & 5

Research your school district's policy on how to address bomb threats and distribute this information to your colleagues. Conduct a workshop specific to safety and preventative security measures.