

Cutline: Governor Ronnie Musgrove talks to school administrators, teachers and students about the safety information needed to place in a Crisis Response Box. The Crisis Response Box has one simple goal: to immediately provide information for effective management of a critical incident in our schools.

A safe learning environment for our children is vital to their success as students. In a crisis situation, minutes and seconds are precious. Those minutes and seconds should be spent putting the crisis response plan into action, not spent gathering information.

The Crisis Response Box holds the information needed by school officials and law enforcement personnel in the event that a crisis occurred at a school or child care facility. “The Box” is an easy 1, 2, 3 approach to crisis planning and prevention. By being prepared, officials are able to work, in a combined effort, to control the situation, rather than be controlled by the situation.

The Governor’s Office distributed the Crisis Response Box to all public schools, HeadStart Centers and Day Care Centers, registered with the Mississippi Department of Human Services, throughout Mississippi. Each school should have “The Box” in a central location that is easy to access. With “The Box” in place, school administrators will be able to work with local authorities to prevent or control a crisis situation. “The Crisis Response Box will complement the safety plans currently in place in our schools,” said Dr. Thompson. “The Box will strengthen our schools’ crisis preparation procedures, and will reinforce our partnerships with law enforcement personnel.”

“I urge teachers, administrators and local authorities throughout the state of Mississippi to work together to embrace this plan and take the steps to be prepared,” said the Governor. “Students deserve the opportunity to learn in a safe environment and be able to realize their full potential without the worry of violence in the classroom.”

We need to take the steps to prepare ourselves for a crisis situation now, in case we are ever again faced with another situation such as the tragedy in Pearl or Columbine. “We have come together with school leaders, crisis management experts and law enforcement officials to develop and implement their plans,” said Public Safety Commissioner David Huggins. The emergency personnel and school officials involved in these and other critical incidents were asked to consider what information would have been helpful during their time of crisis. Their answers became the basis for creating a crisis response information inventory.

This list consists of 22 pieces of information that will be critical in a crisis situation, such as: a campus layout, rosters and pictures of students, teachers and other employees, evacuation sites and designated command posts. If a crisis occurs every school employee should be aware of the crisis plan in order to follow procedure and work hand in hand with the authorities.

Recovery from a crisis requires a team effort where authorities and school administrators know and trust one another. Being familiar with the crisis response plan saves the time of assigning responsibility and provides a peace of mind that everyone knows their duties.

Being prepared is the key to controlling and possibly preventing a crisis. With the Crisis Response Box, our schools can take the steps to prepare before a crisis occurs. Rather than waiting for another tragedy to remind us to act, now is the time to take action to prevent future crises.

“We hope our schools and childcare facilities never need to use the contents in the Crisis Response Box, but we also hope they have “The Box” ready if they ever do face a crisis,” said the Governor.