

Q & A - Safe to Learn - www.safetolearn.com

Interview with Dee Beaugez, Founder of the Safe to Learn Project

1. Why is this project so important right now to every school in the world?

I believe all children deserve to attend safe and secure schools; yet, the frequency and severity of school violence, human-caused incidents and natural disasters is escalating. Our world is changing and I believe that school administrators (principals and assistant principals) must integrate safety and inspiration into every aspect of education and also make time to adapt to changing threats. They must demonstrate sound leadership by embracing a sustainable culture of safety and security.

2. How many people are participating in the Safe to Learn Community Project?

More than 250 people have volunteered their time since 2011.

These include a wide range of professions and subject matter experts, including:

- District Administrators
- Principals
- Assistant Principals
- Teachers
- Educators
- Students
- Government Officials
- Emergency Managers
- First Responders,
- School Police Officers
- Business Owners
- Parents

This powerful group of professionals has guided and assisted in the development of the cutting-edge Safe to Learn Program, as well as in the development of our eBooks about leadership, safety, and lessons learned. These valuable lessons came from their leadership in schools during and after major human-caused terrorism, human-caused incidents, natural disasters and also active shooter incidents.



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The [Advisory Council](#) members provided guidance and also encouraged and supported the development of the initial Website. The [Authors](#) have participated in the publishing process so that *Safe to Learn* features important leadership guidance inclusive of critical strategies and tactics to be use before, during and after any human caused incident or natural disasters.

3. How can our readers/listeners/viewers learn more about Safe to Learn and its products?

Safe to Learn is launching the project by giving away Ada Rosario Dolch's *Principles for Principals – Leading the Way to School Safety* to every principal for [FREE](#). Her breakthrough book details the importance of leadership and trust before, during and after any human-caused or natural disaster.

<http://www.safetolearn.com/principles-for-principals.html>.

We also will be scheduling interviews with Ada Rosario Dolch and Dr. Nancy Degnan about *Safe to Learn* and the overarching changes needed to protect our school children, faculty and administrative staff. *Safe to Learn* also provides direct connections for those who want to know the research behind the ideas we are promoting. For instance, for Dr. Degnan's research study we provide two links at the *Safe to Learn* site.

- **About Dr. Degnan's research study**
<http://www.safetolearn.com/uncommon-sense-uncommon-courage.html>
<http://www.safetolearn.com/dr-nancy-degnan.html>
- **About Ada Rosario Dolch's Story and Leadership Skills**
Please link to this web page and then scroll down and read Ada Rosario Dolch's story *#1 Rebuilding a School Community* - select the videos of her reflections form that day and her story about rebuilding her school community.
<http://tributewtc.org/exhibits/online-story-collections>

More about Ada is found at:

<http://www.safetolearn.com/author-ada-rosario-dolch.html>



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4. What is the most important aspect of school safety that must be revisited or improved?

It's time to renew our commitment to safety and require all staff, students, teachers and administrators to work together and have a plan they all know. It is also important to practice, practice and practice. It is also important to find time saving ways to access information that empowers principals' leadership, provides inspirational messages and also includes examples that can be shared or used to begin conversations.

I discovered that it is possible to make realistic changes in school safety with the help of dedicated school administrators. This was based on:

- Working directly with the [Safe to Learn Pilot Project Team](#) and the [principals and assistant principals from Lamar Consolidated Independent School District](#) since 2009
- Collaborating with the members of the [Safe to Learn Advisory Team](#) and the [Safe to Learn Team](#) since 2011
- Developing new and exciting [products](#) and resources for school safety and inspiration with our staff, contributors, authors and subject matter experts
- Validating new approaches and identifying unmet needs with emergency managers and staff from school police departments

I also realized that creating sustainable projects will require a major shift in priorities so that our country, each state, each county, each school district and each school has unique and validated support. This allows those with responsibility and authority to coordinate planning by talking about the reality of what it takes to create sustainable school safety and mental health programs for each school site.

All participants want their efforts to actually make a difference for each specific campus, teacher, classroom and student. Without guidance that supplies strong, viable strategies, those who can make a difference can become lost in the process and drift away from the progress everyone is desperately seeking.



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My ideas have changed about school safety because I discovered how critical each school administrator 's (principal and assistant principal) leadership is for truly guiding a school safety program on their campus. They are the leaders who are responsible and on site each day at their schools. It is also their job to inspire leadership, and our goal is that the *Safe to Learn* Community Project be available to provide inspiration when needed.

School administrators must also invest time in staff, teachers and students each day. It is important that principals provide "safe" areas and times for open conversations, where there is productive listening. This helps leaders identify the basic resources to support school safety. It is important to realize that assistant principals are typically assigned to do the day-to-day management of school safety programs, but sometimes without the background information and training to be effective. Therefore, they also need to be on the same page as the principals and that have the authority necessary to support school safety programs.

5. **What does Safe to Learn provide that others have missed or that were not available?**

The process of developing the *Safe to Learn* Project has reinforced my beliefs that there must be changes in the way schools, communities and our nation approaches school safety, mental health support and also inspirational learning. This change must include leadership, inspiration, communication, trust, training and time.

Many vital school safety projects were funded from 2003 through 2010 by grants from U.S. Department of Education's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS), as well as other federal grants funded programs. Yet, when grant funds were depleted, schools either had to find ways to cover the ongoing costs, thus increasing demands on their already stretched budgets, or make a choice not to continue the safety programs.



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There will always be demands for safety programs, and many of the funds are designed to be directed to projects that support safety, but not necessarily provide programs where safety becomes part of the daily administrative and academic culture of each school. I believe this must change.

It seems almost impossible for all principals and staff to understand complex emergency plans and annexes. I believe that principals and assistant principals need simple tools and programs that can easily become part of their school's culture, thus helping them bring simple daily and monthly reminders about safety. Then they can incorporate these into their planning meetings and classrooms.

One way to support school safety programs is to provide *simple* leadership, and inspirational learning tools that are easily shared with teachers, who then can include them in monthly projects, as well as providing historical and educational facts that can stimulate discussions in classrooms and support academic requirement.

For example, as I worked with Ada Rosario Dolch, who was in the final stages of writing her story, "*Principles for Principals, Leading the Way to School Safety*." She asked me if the *Safe to Learn* Project would provide the eBook [FREE](#) to every principal.

I asked her if I could start by sharing "*Principles for Principals, Leading the Way to School Safety*" with the principals and assistant principals at Lamar CISD. (This was during the time she was still writing and editing her book.) Once the district staff, principals and assistant principals began reading Ada Rosario Dolch's story they also began sharing their thoughts with me. [Many of the principals and assistant principals shared their reflections](#) and said that her story of leadership changed their perspectives about school safety. That awakening made them even more aware of the importance of principals and assistant principals leadership roles in school safety.

Next, the *Safe to Learn* Team decided to develop and contact subject matter experts who were willing to write additional information for the *Safe to Learn* Leadership & Safety Series.

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Many of them focused the history and on aspects of school safety that they could be share with staff and teachers. I communicated with [Trudy Harris](#), Assistant Director of Employee Services and Risk Manager at Lamar CISD. She liked the idea. She received approval from the District Administration to move forward with a Pilot Project. Several of the [principals and assistant principals](#) agreed to participate in several phases of the [Safe to Learn Pilot Project](#) between 2012-2016.

Our conversations continued. After reading their recommendations and [reflections](#) about the *Safe to Learn* Community Project: I knew then that Ada Rosario Dolch's story and the [Leadership and Safety Series](#) had truly rekindled their commitment to leadership, service and school safety at each of their schools.

It was then that I was totally confident that it was time to move forward and begin the process of expanding the *Safe to Learn* Project. I started by increasing our staff and contributors; requesting all principals or assistant principals participate in the next phase of the [Pilot Project at Lamar Consolidated Independent School District](#); and asking those who helped guide me over the years to serve on the [Safe to Learn Advisory Council](#). By winter October 2015, we had developed the initial pages of the *Safe to Learn* public web site.

For a limited time, *Safe to Learn* is providing *Principles for Principals – Leading the Way to School Safety* [FREE](#) to every principal. To further support the outreach process, we have opened our online [store](#), featuring authors and film makers dedicated to school safety and the protection of our children. Their willingness to share personal lessons learned, have open discussions around difficult decisions allows us to learn from their lessons.

Safe to Learn also features authors that inspire learning and literacy by sharing their skills with colorful stories of history; [travel adventures](#); discovering the flavors of [healthy cooking](#); as well as tales that may make you laugh or even cry. We will also be adding a section designed to inspire and remind us of the importance of life long learning.



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6. How can people support the Safe to Learn Project?

This amazing project is primarily supported by the sales from our [store](#). Your support provides funding so our talented authors and film makers can then develop other leadership tools for teachers, administrators and even students.

Safe to Learn is currently seeking funding for a documentary about this important paradigm shift. With support, the project will proceed by 2017. I feel it is critical to begin capturing interviews with experienced principals, law enforcement officials, first responders and subject matter experts so that they can share their experiences and also provide their personal reflections about what they have experienced. This institutional wisdom is critical, but requires a quality production so that these professionals can share their personal experiences and also their advice for school administrators throughout the world.



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Quotes about “Principles for Principals” by Ada Rosario Dolch

Rekindle Your Commitment to Leadership and Service

"I just finished reading Ada's book, it is amazing! It rekindled my commitment to leadership and service to our children, schools, communities, students, parents, educators, leaders, every citizen!" ~ [Kay Karr](#), Retired Superintendent (Texas) - [How Are the Children?](#)

Let's Set an Example

"Everything we do can be summed up in one word. Let's. It isn't done alone. We need to work together. Let's share. Let's teach. Let's explore. Let's taste. Let's save. Let's recycle. Let's accept. Let's make this world a better place for everyone. Together, let's set an example," ~ [Phillip Martin](#), Artist, Muralist, Teacher & Author

Safety Impacts Education

"Safety is something that we all take for granted especially if all is well in our educational communities. After taking part in this project I realized the impact that safety has on the education and success of our students. Parents entrust us with their wonderful kids thirsty for knowledge on a daily basis and if they feel safe on campus and throughout our community they will flourish in knowledge!" ~ [Trudy Harris](#), CSRM - Assistant Director, Employee Benefits/Risk Management, Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, Texas

Be Proactive

"With great comfort parents send and or drop off their children to our schools, never thinking that some natural or inhumane disaster might reach their children's school house door. Yet there is an enormous responsibility placed on our shoulders daily; keep the entire school community safe. This is not a task that one can muster alone. I trust and hope that sharing my experiences and journey, will cause you to stop and become proactive in the development of a school/community-wide safety plan that will only serve to be better prepared in the case of any emergency that might arise. As Covey would say, "Better to be proactive. Not reactive." ~ [Ada Rosario Dolch](#), Author of *Principles for Principals, Leading the Way to School Safety*

[About Principles for Principals](#) | [Leading the Way to School Safety](#) | [Reflections](#)



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Background - About *Safe to Learn*

The Safe to Learn Project © is a community of practice movement that creates momentum through networks of individuals who believe that every child learns best when he or she also has a fundamental and profound sense of personal security and wellbeing, safety, confidence and acceptance.

- *Safe to Learn* features authors dedicated to school safety and the protection of our children. Their willingness to share personal lessons learned, have open discussions around difficult decisions allows us to learn from their lessons.
- *Safe to Learn* also features authors that inspire learning and literacy by sharing their skills with colorful stories of history; travel adventures; discovering the flavors of healthy cooking; as well as tales that may make you laugh or even cry.

About Ada Rosario Dolch's Gift to All Principals in America

The evacuation of the eight public schools within a quarter of a mile of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001 is one of the greatest “untold” success stories. Despite her own personal pain, knowing that her sister was ever present on the 103rd floor of Tower 1 at the World Trade Center; Ada Rosario Dolch had to focus on the safety of the students and staff.

Her 9/11 story about leadership, *Principles for Principals - Leading the Way to School Safety*, is one of courage and determination that provides the information necessary to bring safety back into our school classrooms and to craft sustainable leadership skills during the most difficult times.

As a gift from Ada Rosario Dolch, her family, and the entire *Safe to Learn Team*, *Principles for Principals, Leading the Way to School Safety* is available [FREE](http://www.safetolearn.com) to every principal.



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