

# **South County High School: Situation Analysis, Strategies, Evaluation, Timeline and Budget**

**Emerald PR:  
Rachel Hass  
Ruth Hickok  
Amber Peterson  
Christina Blaser  
Dara Jester**

## **The Situation**

The event occurred this week in the parking lot of the high school with a non-student, Jack Sanders, flying two Confederate flags from his pick-up truck. He proceeded to exit the truck and assaulted an African-American student. Following this initial act were random acts of violence and vandalism involving some students of South County. This event has raised racial tensions that need to be directly addressed with parents, faculty and students. Emerald Public Relations will assist with the communication and build an immediate situational plan of action. Principal Burdick has requested help to handle the situation from the district's public relations staff.

## **Situation Analysis**

South County High is the largest school in its district. It has a 95% Caucasian student population.

On Wednesday, Jack Sanders entered South County High campus in a pick-up truck flying two Confederate flags. Sanders assaulted an African-American student and proceeded to enter the school to reclaim a jacket from his girlfriend, who had given it to a friend. The friend had become aware of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) patch on his jacket and had cut it off. Sanders walked through the school in attempts to find his jacket and pass out KKK patches. Sanders was then escorted off campus and arrested for assault.

On Thursday, the previous day's incidents raised talk about race and freedom of speech among students at South County High. Tensions increased in many parts of the school. In particular, a heated argument developed among students during band class. No damage was incurred. No students were injured, except one who was bumped in the head with an oboe but sustained no serious injury. Additionally, random acts of vandalism occurred sometime during the day or after school. An anonymous person or group of people glued birdhouses to a workbench in wood shop, and glued shut three cabinet doors and a refrigerator door in the home economics room.

On Friday morning, random acts of violence were discovered. In light of the last two days, about 60 students met with Principal Paul Burdick. There were heated exchanges among students. This meeting ended at 1:15 p.m. Upon exiting this session, a student let out a racial slur. The tension and heated exchanges carried into the lunch period where about 1,000 students gathered, unsupervised. Students started pushing and shoving each other. In attempts to break up the fight, a girl's arm was broken. Teachers and some parents standing by were unaware of how to handle the situation. Local police were called and temporarily restored order in the school.

Following Friday's events, Principal Burdick contacted the school district to have public relations department assist in communication with faculty, parents and students, and to draft an immediate crisis plan of action.

Without an immediate crisis plan and action, further acts of violence could occur, threatening the safety of our students. Knowing the full extent of the situation, it is imperative South County High, and the school district creates an immediate crisis plan to prevent further incidents. The school district will develop an immediate action plan for South County High to avert further incidents and implications.

### **Goal**

For South County High School to be engaged in open conversation with students, faculty, parents, and community members about the current incidents and the actions the school district is taking to rectify the situation and develop future safety measures.

### **Focus Audiences**

Currently the faculty/staff is unaware of details of the events that have occurred on campus. Additionally, they have not been trained in crisis management or how to deal with these particular incidents. The faculty feels that the school should be more responsive and clear in addressing these problems. For immediate purposes, the faculty is necessary to the communication between students, parents and the district.

The parents of students at South County High are currently unaware of the details of the incidents and are concerned for their students' safety.

Currently, the students of South County High are facing the aftermath of violence and racial intolerance. Because of this, they are feeling unsafe, confused and in the dark about the details of the violent incidents. In light of the violent outbreaks, the students feel the school is unsafe.

The media wants to know the details of the incidents and why the situation was allowed to escalate to the extent that it did. Additionally, the media would like to know the intended plan of action and steps to prevent future problems.

The surrounding and involved residents of South County High are currently uninformed of the crisis details. Additionally, they feel unsafe due to the nearness of the crisis and their lack of knowledge of the incidents.

### **Student Objectives**

To provide ongoing information and counseling services in order to promote a safe and accepting learning environment for South County High Students. Through open communication and counseling services students will experience a socially accepting learning environment in South County High.

## **Student Strategy**

Beginning Monday morning in “home room” or first period class, each teacher will address the current situation and status of the crisis in order to quash any false rumors of about the incidents. The teachers will be provided with guidelines listing the specific details to address the worries of the students. There will also be a question and answer section at the end of the period. Additionally, the student body president will create a Facebook group for South County High (assuming one doesn’t already exist) in order to post an announcement about the details of each incident and to get the word out over the weekend. The goal of the Facebook group will not be the primary outlet to inform students of the situation and additional updates, but as a supplementary informational tool. Counselors will also be available throughout the next two weeks to provide support and advice to students at South County. Because the Student body (i.e. Student body President, Vice-President Etc.) has a larger presence and voice when speaking to their fellow students, it is important that they take a leadership role in the crisis management. Early Monday morning before school, Principal Burdick and one of the South County High counselors will meet with the Student body officials and a local community diversity outreach group to go over an assembly focusing on diversity for that afternoon. The local community diversity outreach group will have a previously prepared skit and speech to perform during the afternoon assembly. This assembly will involve the crowd through volunteer participation and consist of hypothetical skits and fully eliminate any potential rumors circulating throughout South County High.

## **Student Tactics**

1. Students will be directly addressed in their first period classes by their teachers on the details of the incidents from the previous week. The teachers will be provided with a script giving a detailed overview of each incident that occurred during the previous week, address likely rumors that have been circulating throughout the school, as well as explain the immediate actions and policy changes that will occur. The faculty will generate this script during the Saturday morning and Sunday night faculty meeting.
2. During the question and answer portion of the announcements the students can openly ask questions about the incidents. For students who don’t feel comfortable asking specific questions, an empty box will be passed around for students to write down their anonymous questions. The teachers will address these questions in front of the class. For students who would like to personally talk with a counselor or teacher about their questions or concerns, there will be counseling sessions available, as well as teacher office hours.
3. The student body president will collaborate with the Principal Burdick and head counselor on Friday afternoon to create a Facebook group for the school. This group will invite as many South County High students as possible. Within the group, the president and the faculty members will post a note about the details of each incident and clearly list the false rumors and reasons why they are false.
4. Counselors will be available for the next two weeks for students who are concerned

with the incidents that occurred. There will be group sessions on diversity, racism in today's society, anger management and violence. One on one counseling sessions will also be provided in order to address personal issues associated with the incidents. Teachers will announce counseling hours and contact information in first period.

5. The South County High Student body officials will lead four assemblies during Monday afternoon. There will be one assembly for each class of students (i.e. freshman, sophomore, Junior, Senior). Principal Burdick and the student body officials will meet early Monday morning to go over the details of the assembly and generate ideas for the skits. The assembly will be about 40 minutes long and cover diversity and racial issues within the school, skits on utilizing the counselors at South County High for personal or peer issues, skits on the common rumors going around at the school and why they are false, and a quick speech from Principal Burdick stating the full details of the incidents, the steps the school will be taking in order to combat the racial issues at South County High, and resources for the students if they would like to talk about the racial barriers or the incidents that have occurred.

### **Faculty and Staff Objectives**

To educate the faculty and staff by Sunday night on managing conflict and crisis situations in order for them to be informed and prepared by Monday. Through training the faculty and staff will be able to demonstrate a zero tolerance towards racism and violence.

### **Faculty/Staff Strategy**

Because the faculty and staff of the school are necessary to halt the escalation of the situation, there will need to be immediate action taken to communicate and meet with them over the weekend. There will be two possible meetings/training seminars held over the weekend for the faculty and staff to attend in order to accommodate varying schedules. All faculty and staff are required to attend one of the meeting/training seminars to properly prepare the school for a situational management plan and communication with the students. This meeting will serve as a place for the faculty and staff to communicate their concerns, get their questions answered, and learn the details of the incidents. The training seminar will assist the faculty and staff in writing the important details of the incidents to share with their students, how to answer various questions from the students, where to direct the students if they would like to talk with someone about the events, and how to properly communicate the details of the situation, while assuring the students and parents that they are safe at South County High. The faculty and staff also have a pertinent role in the communication with the parents of South County High. This training seminar will teach and give the faculty and staff tips on communicating and consoling concerned parents and places to direct them for further information. Both of the meetings/training seminars will be taught and led by Principal Burdick and the school district's public relations team. Additionally, Principal Burdick's secretaries will mail letters to every parent, explaining every detail of the previous week's

incidents. These will be mailed by Saturday morning. The secretaries and the public relations team will also update the South County High Web site with current information about the events and the steps taking place to ensure the safety and security of the students at South County. If there are significant numbers of parents who have provided the school with email addresses, the public relations team and South County High secretaries will send out emails to these parents about the incidents. In order to reach the community members who live in close proximity to the school, volunteer faculty members will drop off letters in each mailbox, detailing the incidents that have occurred at South County High and the actions being made to ensure their safety. Principal Burdick will also hold a meeting for parents on Tuesday evening if there are parents who are still concerned or would like more information about the incidents.

### **Faculty/Staff Tactics**

1. Two meetings/training seminars will be held over the weekend in order to accommodate the faculty and staff's schedules. Both of the meetings/training seminars will be three hours long, with the first held on Saturday at 10:00 a.m., and the second held on Sunday at 4:00 p.m. Both meetings will include food and beverages. These meetings/training seminars will be held in the cafeteria at South County High in order to cut costs and provide tables and chairs for each faculty and staff member. The meeting will begin with a speech from Principal Burdick on the details of the incidents, a breakdown of the times of each incident, who was involved, and the background behind each event. Principal Burdick will then announce the crisis management plan, including the proposed plan for the following school week and future prevention tactics for the next few school weeks. Principal Burdick will then hold a question and answer forum in order to address specific concerns of the proposed crisis plan and squash any rumors of the details of the incidents. If needed, the public relations team will assist Principal Burdick in answering questions about the proposed crisis plan and how it will work. The public relations team and Principal Burdick will then lead the faculty and staff in a training seminar on communication and management. This seminar will assist the faculty and staff in properly addressing the concerns and consoling the students and parents in a time of heightened emotions. The training seminar will also set up a guideline for the faculty and staff to follow when speaking about the details of the incidents in order to avoid further escalation of rumors.
2. Included in the faculty and staff will be South County High counselors. The counselors will assist the students through the next three weeks with group and one-on-one counseling sessions. These counselors will be available for the next two weeks to assist the students with issues surrounding the racial tension and the previous incidents.
3. Principal Burdick will write a letter on Friday afternoon to the parents detailing the previous week's events and the steps taking place to ensure their child's safety and security. It will also include information about the parent meeting on Tuesday night and contact information if they have any immediate questions. These letters will be mailed to the parents by Saturday morning.
4. The public relations team and the secretaries of South County High will update the South County High Web site with information about the incidents of the

- previous week, actions taking place to combat the racial tension and violence, meeting and assembly times, and contact information for specific questions about the events. This will be posted on the home page of the school's Web site. There will also be tips for parents on how to talk to their child/ren about racial and diversity issues.
5. Assuming email addresses of parents were asked during student registration, the public relations team and the secretaries of South County High will send a mass email to the parents about the incidents and the plan for the next few weeks. It will contain a link to the school's Web site and contact information to speak with someone about these incidents. This email will include much of the information that was included in the mailed letter. The public relations team will use this email as another source of communication to the parents in case any of the other forms fell through the cracks.
  6. Principal Burdick will hold a parent meeting on Tuesday evening at 5:30 p.m. to communicate directly with parents who are still concerned with the previous week's events, the current state of South County High, and their student's safety. This meeting will be held on Tuesday to ensure the receipt of the mailed letters to the parents. This parent meeting will serve as a chance to speak one-on-one with Principal Burdick and the counselors of South County High. Principal Burdick will start with a speech about the incidents and a detailed account of the steps taking place to improve the school. The meeting will then break into a question and answer session. If it seems that there will be many questions, or there is a large turnout at the meeting, the parents will be asked to write down any of their questions on a piece of paper with their contact information and the Principal will directly contact them within the next week. The head counselor at South County High will then make a speech on the services being provided to the students, the importance of counseling during emotionally heightened times, and contact information to reach the counseling department. Faculty and staff members will be asked to attend this meeting in order to provide an extra voice and support for South County High.
  7. Volunteer faculty members will drop off letters to the surrounding community members' mailboxes over the weekend. These letters will detail the incidents that occurred during the previous school week; steps being taken to combat the racial tension and violence ensure the safety of the surrounding community members and provide contact information to voice their concerns to the school.
  8. On Friday evening a staff member of the school will call the parents of students who were directly injured in the fight in the cafeteria in order to maintain open communication.

### **Parent Objectives**

To inform the parents of students at South County High the details of the incidents that occurred, as well as the measures that will be taken to ensure their child's safety. By taking quick action to inform parents of the situation, the school district would like parents to remain patient and aware the school district is doing everything possible to

ensure the safety of the students.

### **Parents Strategy**

Parents of students involved directly with the incident will be contacted by Friday evening with the details of the incident and their child's role in the incident. By Monday or Tuesday morning, parents of the students at South County High will receive letters through traditional mail addressing the current situation and status of the situation in order to eliminate any false rumors of the details of the incidents. Informational emails will be sent to all parents who have provided South County with an email address by Friday evening. A direct phone number will be made available in the emails and letters to address the questions and concerns of the parents who wish to speak with someone of authority about the issue and the steps the school is taking to restore order. The South County High Web site will be updated by Friday afternoon to show current information pertaining to the incident. The school will also hold a meeting for concerned parents on Tuesday evening to address the issue face to face with faculty, staff, the principle, the school's superintendent, and parents.

### **Parent Tactics**

1. A letter with details of the incident and the steps the school is currently taking will be created on Friday, addressed, and sent through traditional mail by Saturday morning. Parents will receive an e-mail by Friday evening on the details of the incidents and a link to the updated school Web site.
2. The South County High Web site will be updated on Friday to inform the parents and public of the incident and the steps the school is currently taking to resolve the issue and restore order to the campus.
3. A direct phone line will be available by Friday afternoon and included in the letter and email. This will allow parents and the public to call for more information on the incident and to collect and address any concerns they may have. The phone line will continue to be available for the entire week after the incident.
4. A meeting will be held Tuesday night at South County High where parents will be greeted by faculty, public relations staff, and the school district staff to discuss the event face to face. By Tuesday night the public relations team will have already made a solid action plan and fact sheet, which will be made available to the public, but also provided at a Tuesday night meeting with parents. The meeting will include faculty members and school district staff who will be able to answer the questions and concerns of parents.

### **Media Objectives**



To communicate the details of the incidents and the proposed plan to the media, as well as continued communication throughout the situation and the implementation of the plan in order to ensure correct publication of the incidents.

### **Media Strategy**

The school will aim to set up an open communication system with the local media. It will make all necessary and relevant information available. The school will set up open communication lines and provide all information in a transparent manner. The school will not seek to influence the media and slant the angle of the stories. All updates will be provided to the media in a timely manner.

### **Tactics**

1. Media representatives will be informed of the faculty meeting/training seminar on Saturday and Sunday. They will be invited to the meeting with the parents and members of the community surrounding South County High School on Tuesday evening. At these meetings, the media will be allowed to ask questions and participate in discussion.
2. Fact sheets and up-to-date press releases will be distributed to make information available and prevent disinformation and rumors from being spread. The fact sheets will include a comprehensive overview of the events that took place, as well as the plans for future action as they unfold.
3. Media members will be given the number for the established phone line if they require more information. This will help to ensure the consistency of information being provided.
4. Contact information for the media representatives will be taken so as to be able to provide them with updates in a timely manner as events unfold.

### **Community Members Objectives**

To communicate the details of incidents at South County High and explain the proposed plan to immediate community residents to renew their confidence in the school's ability to manage the situation effectively.

### **Community Members Strategy**

On Monday morning, a South County High representative will distribute a letter to the surrounding and involved residents. This letter is going to explain the incidents that took place at the end of last week, the meeting that took place on Sunday, and the proposed "crisis" plan to ensure confidence. The letter will also provide contact information for those residents who have further questions. The letter should provide enough information to ensure the safety of the surrounding and involved residents.

## **Tactics**

1. A school representative who holds an authoritative position will hand-deliver an informative letter to each surrounding and involved South County High resident. If the resident is home, the representative will inform the person that the letter provides them with information about the incidents. If they have further questions there is direct contact information provided. If no one is home, the letter will be placed into appropriate mailboxes.
2. The letter will summarize the incidents that took place on campus during the end of last week about the school meeting that took place on Sunday, and about the proposed plan.
3. This letter will also assure residents that if a situation should occur again, that the proposed plan will be effective immediately and actions will take place to promote student and community member's safety. It will also thank the residents for remaining confident in South County High.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation of this plan is provided in two ways: 1.) short-term progress tracking, a report issued on a regular basis that monitors progress toward achievement of each objective and is shown at the end of this plan; and 2.) longer-term assessments that explain how the desired outcomes for each objective are measure.

**Objective #1:** To provide ongoing information and counseling services in order to promote a safe and accepting learning environment for South County High Students. Through open communication and counseling services students will experience a socially accepting learning environment in South County High.

**Assessment:** Success in achieving this will be determined by feedback from counselors on student visitations, responses from teachers about student awareness, and feedback from students regarding their personal safety at South County High. There will also be classroom student "focus groups" during first period in order to receive feedback on the communication and services provided to the students during this time. These focus groups will be held two weeks after the original incidents.

**Objective #2:** To educate the faculty and staff by Sunday night on managing conflict and crisis situations in order for them to be informed and prepared by Monday. Through training the faculty and staff will be able to demonstrate a zero tolerance towards racism and violence.

**Assessment:** Teachers and staff will participate in an open-ended discussion following the meeting to address any comments or concerns, and will proceed to fill out a worksheet after the discussion to evaluate their knowledge of managing the current crisis situation.

**Objective #3:** To inform the parents of students at South County High the details of the incidents that occurred, as well as the measures that will be taken to promote their child's safety. By taking quick action to inform parents of the situation, the school district would like parents to remain patient and aware the school district is doing everything possible to ensure the safety of the students.

**Assessment:** Parent awareness will be determined by feedback from the parents via e-mail, phone calls (a phone line will be open and operated by the staff for parents to call if they have questions or concerns needed to be addressed), or Tuesday meeting attendance.

**Objective #4:** To communicate the details of the incidents and the proposed plan to the media, as well as continued communication throughout the situation and the implementation of the plan in order to ensure correct publication of the incidents.

**Assessment:** Success in achieving media awareness about the details of the incident will be through viewing media outlets to find out if the media reported the incidents accurately.

**Objective #5:** To communicate the details of incidents at South County High and explain the proposed plan to immediate community residents to renew their confidence in the school's ability to manage the situation effectively.

**Assessment:** Measuring the confidence of surrounding neighbors to South County High will be through e-mails and phone calls by the neighbors; the crisis hotline number, as well as the school's e-mail address, will be provided in the information sheet given to all of the neighbors.

By achieving the desired outcome for each of the plan's objectives we will accomplish the goal For South County High School to be engaged in open conversation and addressing school safety.

## **Timeline**

### **Friday, March 6**

The public relations team and Principal Burdick will meet in the early afternoon to go over the proposed crisis plan and develop the details of the training seminar and meeting for the faculty and staff over the weekend.

Letters and e-mails will be drafted in the afternoon by the public relations team and the secretaries of South County High. The mass email will be sent to every parent that has provided South County High with their email address. The South County High Web site will also be updated.

The media will be contacted by the public relations team to let them know the details of the incidents and invite them to the meetings/training seminars over the weekend.

Friday evening, an administrator of South County High will contact each parent of the students directly injured and involved in the incidents.

### **Saturday, March 7**

Beginning at 10:00 a.m., the faculty and staff will arrive at South County High to participate in the meeting/training seminar. This will last until 1:00 p.m.

Student body president and Principal Burdick will meet to go over the details of the Facebook group and note.

Letters will be printed and mailed to the parents of South County High.

Sunday, March 8

4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.- the meeting/training seminar will occur with Principal Burdick, Emerald PR and any faculty and staff members who didn't attend Saturday's meeting.

### **Monday, March 9**

Before school the student body president and officials will meet with Principal Burdick to go over the afternoon assemblies.

During first period class, the teachers will openly discuss the incidents that have occurred and what will be happening in the next week.

In the afternoon, volunteer faculty members will deliver the letters to surrounding and involved community members.

Four assemblies will occur during the afternoon led by student body officials and Principal Burdick.

Counseling sessions will be openly held throughout the day.

### **Tuesday, March 10**

Counseling sessions will be openly held throughout the day

Principal Burdick will hold a parent meeting in the evening

### **Wednesday, March 11**

Principal Burdick will contact any other concerned parents who have left questions and

their contact information.

**Budget**

**Estimated Budget**

Expenses

Local Community Diversity Outreach Program      **TBD**

**Total Cost**      **TBD**