



HOW TO HELP CHILDREN THRIVE



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THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC HAS TOUCHED EVERY ONE OF US IN WAYS WE COULD NOT HAVE IMAGINED. CHILDREN HAVE HAD THEIR ROUTINES DRAMATICALLY TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

Many school administrators worried students who depended on school meals would not have the same access to meals during the pandemic. An analysis by researchers at Northwestern University found food insecurity has more than tripled among households with children to 29.5%.

Food security is not the only concern for school administrators. Roughly 6% of U.S. children live with serious emotional or behavioral difficulties. Many depend on schools for access to vital therapies.

Social unrest, while not new to schools, is also a concern. In April 2018, after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, thousands of students across the country walked out of classes at 10 a.m., some in defiance of school authorities, in a coordinated student protest.

The United States has experienced a great deal of social unrest during the pandemic, and active assailants are not going away. Active-shooter events recently occurred in Atlanta and Boulder, Colorado. School administrators need to remain vigilant.

Ensuring the safety and security of students has always been a priority for those responsible for educating our youth. California Policy Lab Research Director Johanna Lacoë, in a paper published by the Institute for Education and Social Policy in 2013, stated that safety is a prerequisite for effective learning, and feelings of safety are positively related to both behavioral and academic outcomes.

Our industry has helped students feel safe by supporting schools in physical security efforts. Now we still need to ask

ourselves, "What else can we do to help students learn more effectively?"

Schools are part of our community. There may be existing programs available in your area providing opportunities to share your time, talent and treasures. We can make a larger impact for future generations if we and our organizations partner with schools now to help students learn and grow.

Sharing resources is another way we can help. For example, Allegion has participated in National Manufacturing Day for many years by inviting students to tour our manufacturing facilities and listen to employees talk about their career paths.

When we realized students would not be able to tour our facilities in the fall 2020, we created virtual tours by hosting web-based video meetings, inviting students in the communities where our plants are located. We shared recordings of these meetings with schools across the country. You can see them at www.tinyurl.com/SchoolMeetings.

Mentoring is also extremely valuable, and I recommend the ACE Mentor Program. ACE stands for Architecture, Construction and Engineering, and the program aspires to engage, excite and enlighten high school students about those career fields. Learn more at www.acementor.org.

Now more than any other time in our lifetime we need to consider doing more to help our local education authorities. We have the resources, the time, talent and treasure to make a difference in the lives of children in our communities. Let's start with the mindset of our own teachers and serve others as they have served us. It's time to give back. +