Colorado communities and schools have spent much of the past year reflecting on the lessons of Columbine. It is a top priority for many communities and schools to provide safe learning environments for their children.

At the same time Colorado public schools are currently under pressure to meet the state’s content standards and improve test scores. Teachers and administrators struggle to identify any “extra time” during the school day that could be devoted to violence prevention. CSPV believes that both education and school safety can be addressed, and in fact, recognizes the relationship between improving the school climate and consequently improving test scores.

Child psychologist Jim Comer of the Yale Child Study Center at Yale University founded the School Development Program, also known as the Comer Process. Comer has worked with over 300 school communities with the intention that a healthy community-school relationship fosters a strong school climate, and then demonstrates the correlation between school climate and academic success. A recent report by researchers at the Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research (IPR) indicated that students’ academic achievement and school climate improved at the 10 Chicago elementary schools that are implementing the Comer Process. At the same time, negative social behaviors declined among the students.

Effective and comprehensive violence prevention programs can be implemented in an interdisciplinary manner so as not to interrupt the academic curriculum. Some Colorado middle schools have been integrating violence prevention into the entire schoolyear curriculum. CSPV is developing a fact sheet (available Summer, 2000) of specific strategies to include violence prevention in the classroom while remaining consistent with academic demands.
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“When children are developing well, they learn well.”
James Comer

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