



Who Should Read

- Heads of school
- CFOs

St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School's Tabletop Exercise Scenarios

Sample Scenarios for Schools to Use in Testing Risk
Response and Demonstrate Responsibility

Ways to Use these Scenarios

- Use these hypothetical scenarios to practice school protocols and procedures
- Use the scenarios to reinforce shared responsibility among community members

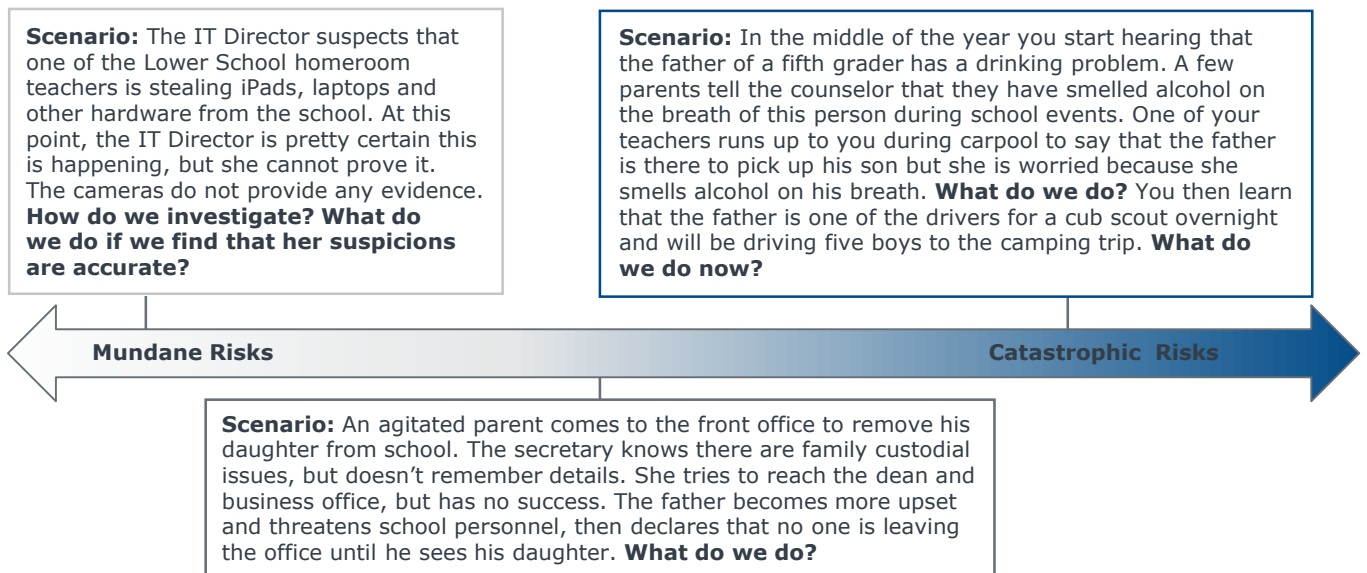
Resource Overview

Tabletop Exercises Used to Help Administrators Practice Risk Response

St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School Regularly Uses Tabletop Exercises to Practice Risk Response

In order to make sure that everyone is able to respond to incidents appropriately, St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School's (SSSAS) uses tabletop exercises twice monthly with its administrative team. Tabletops are realistic, hypothetical scenarios, often adapted from real-life examples, that push individuals to think on their feet about how to respond. While many schools use tabletop exercises, most limit the scenarios to crises; at SSSAS, tabletops range from mundane to catastrophic scenarios, as illustrated below.

Range of Tabletop Exercises at St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School



Though SSSAS conducts tabletop exercises with its administrative team, the practice can benefit others on campus, such as faculty and staff, to illustrate their role in risk mitigation and response. Participating in tabletop exercises also helps to surface whether community members need more training on existing protocols, or whether said protocols need to be adjusted.



Instructions for Tabletop Exercises

1. To administer tabletop exercises, assign participants to small groups of 2-4 if working with a larger group.
2. Begin by presenting a story or scenario to the group. Then give the participants a short period of time (60-90 seconds) to talk through the scenario in their group(s) and determine how to respond.
3. Once they have established an initial response, add complicating factors or additional details, and give the participants more time to work through their next steps.
4. Next, bring the group together so that they can talk about their responses to the scenario as a larger group.
5. If the group identifies gaps in current policies or practices, make the appropriate changes or updates. Follow up with additional training or resources as needed if participants require additional support in implementing established protocols.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis

TABLETOP Scenarios for working with your teams

Kirsten Adams

These tabletop scenarios come from a variety of sources and people. The scenarios are not based upon specific real situations but rather come from a variety of situations.

1. Seacoast Academy is a K-12 school with 1,200 students. The entire institution sits on 750 acres near a large metropolitan area. For many years, faculty member, John Doe, has served the school with distinction. He is revered by teachers, students, staff, parents, trustees, and graduates. He has taught in both the math and science departments and is seen as caring, dynamic, and brilliant. Ten years earlier, he coached the boys' basketball team to a league championship before retiring after 22 years leading the team. His wife also serves the school as a first-grade teacher. She has worked at Seabrook for 27 years and is equally beloved. Recently on campus there has been a rash of theft. Computers, money, and other expensive items have been taken from various areas of the school. This morning, a newly hired housekeeper told her supervisor and two other housekeepers she saw a man take a laptop from a student's backpack and walk out to his car the day before where she saw him place the laptop in his trunk. When asked for a description, she said it was the teacher in classroom 102. That teacher is John Doe. What will you do?
2. A beloved teacher who has served the school for 30 years does not show up to work on Wednesday morning. The Division Director had no idea that he would be off campus nor does his team. The teacher lives alone and cannot be reached via cell phone. It is now 11:00 am and no one has heard from the teacher. What should we do?
3. It's 5:45 p.m., a small fire has broken out in the school which causes students and staff to evacuate the building. The fire department has been called. Students do not go to their traditional gathering sites and "hang out" in the parking lots. The students become restless and parents start arriving, since practices are letting out. Some parents start to complain because they would like to leave with their child and there appears to be no control of staff and students. What should we do?
4. It is the Monday after admission decision letters are sent in the mail. An irate father enters the Upper School wanting to know why his son was denied. Everyone in the administrative hallway is in their offices meeting with their advisories, The Head of School is visiting an advisory in the math wing, the front office receptionist is in the ladies' room and Head's assistant is on the phone. Since no one is there to talk to the father, he starts yelling in the front office. What do we do?

5. From time to time admissions will work with a family living in another country. While most families will tour in the fall and early winter, we sometimes meet an international family later in the process. In February the Smith family arrived in town and went on their tour. They have two lower school students in the admissions process. After the tour the admission director sat down with the parents for their interview. Questions were asked about their hopes for their children and questions were asked about their current school environment. After a nice conversation the admission director asked if they had any questions. The father took a breath and said, "I have been told by current parents and we have read online that if our children are not athletic they will not have a good experience here. We have heard this from parents who have athletic children and those who do not. In addition, we hear from a current parent that the boys in the class are not very nice. We are not worried about our children fitting in - we are worried about your students not accepting them."
 - Through the conversation you can discern who the current family is that is sharing this information.
 - What do you say to the family in your office?
 - Do you say anything to the current family?

6. At the start of a new school year, the Head of School receives a call from a very vocal parent who is concerned about their child's teacher. The parent has done some research over the summer and found that their new teacher has made some questionable comments on their social media page. The parent is concerned that the teacher will pass on these views to the class and is insistent that the child be removed and placed in a different class.
 - How should this situation be handled?
 - Should the school take action based on an employee's personal beliefs?
 - What if the posts in question clearly display discriminatory viewpoints?
 - What if the posts in question are about the teacher's spouse who is of the same sex?
 - What if the postings are from the teacher's spouse and the parent is concerned that the teacher holds the same views as their spouse?

7. It is August and a family with a rising senior and a rising 5th grader have yet to pay their balance of tuition (\$95K) from the past few years. They have been in the school since pre-kindergarten and have been up and down on the payments, but have never been this far behind. The Head of School has told the family that they will be unable to return to the school if they do not get caught up prior to the opening of school. The parents ask for transcripts to be released, but the school does not release transcripts if there is an outstanding balance. It is two days before school begins and the mother comes to your office asking what you are going to do. What will you do? From time to time admissions will work with a family living in another country.

8. A mother of a new seventh grade family calls the Middle School Director in early August. She asks to schedule a meeting to discuss some sensitive concerns about her daughter's transition to the school, but doesn't provide any additional details. The director arranges a time to meet with both the mother and father of the new student. During the meeting, the father explains that after an incident with an underage girl several years ago, he is a confessed and registered sex offender. He doesn't offer many details, but he explains that the incident happened during a difficult period in his life, and he has since undergone years of counseling and substance abuse recovery. He tells you that he is not a threat to anyone in the community. Both parents acknowledge and accept that the situation is difficult, and they are willing to discuss any steps the school would like them to take. Before their recent move, things were difficult for their daughter at school because of her father's record. They want to be cooperative and proactive to ensure that there are no negative repercussions for their daughter. They want her to be fully embraced as a member of the school community.
 - How do you respond to the parents in the meeting? What are the next steps?
 - What short-term and long-term issues need to be addressed?
 - Who will be affected and who will need to be involved?
9. An Upper School student approaches a teacher just after lunch and tells them that a man was hanging out in the lobby of the front office as she left her band practice. This man made suggestive comments and made her feel very uncomfortable. The teacher has just reported this situation to you 5 minutes after it was reported to her. What will you do?
10. During one of the summer camps a group of students were given time for free play outside on the playground. The free play turned into a mock Civil War battle as the camp had just visited a historic battleground. The campers were running around the playground having a great time when the camp director overheard a Caucasian camper address an African-American camper with a racial slur. Neither camper is a student at the school.
 - What should the camp director do?
 - What points of contact need to be made?
11. The Head of School receives a phone call on a Sunday morning from a Middle School faculty member who was arrested for a DWI on Saturday night. There is a buzz in the community since a number of school families drove by when he was performing the sobriety check. The faculty member has been at the school for twenty years, has three children in the school, and has never had a discipline issue. The teacher is also a coach of the Upper School tennis team.
 - What should we do as a school?
 - What are our ethical obligations to the faculty member and to the community?

12. It is 5:15 PM on a spring day and you are driving home and 5-minutes from campus when your cell phone rings. The caller, a parent, says that there has been a lightning strike near the track and lacrosse fields. According to this parent, some people have been hurt. She hears this from her 9th grade daughter who just called her. What are your next steps?
13. Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, who are relocating from Atlanta, meet with the Admissions Director to discuss their daughters who are applying to 4th (or 8th or 10th) and 11th grades. During the interview, the parents share that the 4th grader (or 8th or 10th) was born biologically male, but identifies and presents as female. The 4th grader has great grades, teacher recommendations, and is passionate about robotics and basketball. The admissions committee determines that the 4th grader would be an excellent fit at our school and makes an offer of admission.
- What will we do to make sure that the family is welcomed into the community?
 - How can the school prepare for a smooth transition to our community for the 4th grader and her family?
 - What questions should we anticipate?
14. On a Monday morning several upset students come into the Multicultural Director's office. A couple of students who attended a Black Lives Matter rally that past Saturday saw one of our faculty standing among the protesters holding confederate flags and shouting derogatory statements. The students say they will not attend his class until the situation is dealt with by administrators, because they consider it a hostile environment. Word of the walkout is traveling quickly through the Upper School and other students are joining in the protest.
- How should this situation be addressed with the students?
 - What action, if any, is taken towards the faculty involved?
15. A student from the class of 2014 was expelled during his senior year for drug infractions. When he left the school, he was asked not to come back on campus at any time. It's the spring of 2015, and this young alumnus comes back on campus to watch a 4:00 pm home lacrosse game. It's a spring afternoon, and there are multiple sporting events taking place. He is not causing any trouble at this point, but he is not allowed to be on campus. Once he leaves campus, we notice that he is tweeting/posting on Facebook about how his alma mater kicked him off his own campus - he is furious and using inappropriate language.
- What are the steps you would take?
 - Who should be notified once this alumnus is spotted?
 - Who should ask the alumnus to leave, and ensure he exits the campus?
 - What if his social media post is gaining traction, and other alumni are now commenting about how the school is not a welcoming place?

16. It's May and, as a member of the development office, you are working hard to reach out to the parents in the lower school who have yet to make a pledge to The School Fund (despite multiple attempts through mailings, phone calls and emails). You know how important it is to have a high participation of giving from parents.
- You arrive at your office early Monday morning and are greeted by an Annual Fund Volunteer who wants to give you a heads up. She shows you a copy of an email sent out to all kindergarten parents this past weekend by another kindergarten parent, Mr. Helpemout. Mr. Helpemout explains in his email that a kindergarten student will not be able to stay at the school unless his parents can come up with the \$7,500 they need to cover their portion of tuition. The email says that the school has given the Smith family financial aid, but that the Smiths just can't make the \$7,500 balance. Mr. Helpemout has a son who is good friends with the kindergartner and he explains in great detail about how wonderful the kindergartner is in the email. Mr. Helpemout starts a crowdfunding site, includes the link in the email, and encourages all parents to contribute toward the \$7,500 so that the Jimmy Smith can remain at the school. Mr. Helpemout even explains that simple math shows that if every parent in Kindergarten could give \$125, Jimmy could stay at the school! Mr. Helpemout further explains that since the money is going toward a scholarship, all gifts will be tax-deductible.
 - You know that the Business Office always works diligently with parents to figure out payment plans for families who are struggling with their tuition payments. Unfortunately, the letter says that the business office has demanded the \$7,500 payment all at once and has essentially "pulled the rug out from under this family." You are still trying to secure pledges from the families in the lower school and were planning on reaching out to the K class with individual calls and emails this week.
 - What do you do?
17. An accident related to the classroom renovation project results in a gas leak in a school building at 12:00 p.m. All the Administrators are away at a meeting. You hear about this over a campus radio while standing at the switchboard. What will you do?
18. An agitated parent shows up in the front office and requests to remove his daughter from school. The secretary knows there are some custodial issues with the family, but does not remember the details. She tries to reach the Dean and someone in the business office, but has no success. The father becomes more upset and threatens the Upper School personnel, then declares that no one is leaving the office until he sees his daughter. What will you do?

19. At the homecoming game, a teacher sitting in the stands notices a group of overly loud and obnoxious parents at halftime, pulling items from a cooler. The teacher looks closer and notices that the parents are drinking beers and sharing drinks among the group. Nearby, there are older students and other young children. Some of the older students are drinking out of red Solo cups. It is unclear what is in the red cups and where the beverages came from.
- What should the teacher do?
 - Who should confront the parents and students?
 - What if the confrontation turns contentious, drawing the attention of other spectators?
20. A parent arranges to meet in your office to discuss progress his son is having in a couple of his classes and to share concerns about his son's teachers. As the meeting starts, the parent pulls a sealed envelope out of his pocket and places it on the table separating the two of you. He then informs you that the envelope contains a check for the Annual Fund, but that he and his wife have hesitation about the contribution because of the concerns they have about their son's teachers.
- What do you say to the parents?
 - What do you do next?