Assessing Safety

So when we start talking about laws and regulations and things like that, of course several of our programs have many different laws and regulations that they may need to adhere to. From a school district standpoint, from a facility standpoint, and an accessible standpoint, whenever you start talking about coming into a building and things like that, of course from the sidewalk, the width of the sidewalk, the grade of the sidewalk, and all those things, sometimes when students have to go outside from one building to another, accessibility issues could come into play, where maybe there’s a ramp that has too steep of a grade or doesn’t have a handrail and things like that. So there are several laws and regulations from the Americans with Disabilities Act that school districts might need to be mindful of to make sure that they are in compliance, so they don’t have an issue there.

When we start talking about the individual classroom, and we start talking about the students within a classroom, and as far as the different regulations and laws that they have to deal with of course probably one of them is safety glasses. We talk about the safety glasses need to meet the OSHA standards and have the Z87.1 number imprinted on them, either on the glass or somewhere on the frame itself, so that they meet impact resistant standards. Our school districts don’t actually fall underneath OSHA control or the regulations, but it’s definitely best practices to follow their recommendations, so that we head off any potential problems.

When we start talking about chemical storage, and solvents, and things like that, certainly we want to make sure we have the data safety sheets on file, so that in the event of a spill, or an accident, or a fire, or anything like that, our first responders are aware of what chemicals that they’re dealing with. So that they understand that we need to either evacuate the facility or whatever needs to happen.

As far as different laws and regulations, I think it comes down to, you know as far as an accessibility standpoint and things like that from the Americans with Disabilities Act, where you have to kind of go back that would probably fall back more on the individual school district. As far as from a teacher standpoint, and the responsibilities of a teacher, certainly you want to check with your local administration on the policy and procedures on things that you should do or not do, definitely get the input and guidance from your administration before you introduce anything new into your program area, especially for a piece of equipment, or whether it’s in a culinary facility and you’re bringing in a brand new piece of equipment, or anything like that. You definitely want to make sure that your administration is aware of it, and make sure that everybody, all the students that are going to be using it, know safe operations and things like that, so that we don’t have any issues there.

I know a lot of times when we talk to administrators, unfortunately you do have to prepare for the worst, and you do always have to have in the back of your mind that that worst case scenario, whether it be a severe thunderstorm, or whatever comes in and damages your facility, and things like that, what are your contingency plans, where are you going to hold classes at, when will we get back into school and things like that? As far as a tool, I actually created something, and I’ve had the opportunity to go out and do several program evaluations at
a lot of our region six schools as well as some other schools across the state, and the one thing I seem to have a reoccurring from our administrators is that they don’t have anything to know that if I’m a brand new administrator, and I’m coming out to evaluate the welding teacher, for example, on their PDAS evaluation. What am I supposed to be looking at? What really should I be looking for other than their teaching style, and their teaching method, and their classroom management is there anything from a facility standpoint? So I started to develop a document, a checklist if you will. The first document that I created, it actually brought in PDAS evaluation along with a walk through evaluation form that an administrator could use for both purposes. Well since then, of course our current educator evaluation system is under change, so I started focusing more from a safety standpoint. And so I guess, for a lack of a better term, it’s a safety walk through form that I’ve created, about a nine page document, and it’s a checklist that encompasses a lot of things that I’ve discussed from a standpoint, of course a safety standpoint, from a facility standpoint, tools and equipment, accessibility, and things like that, there’s a lot of information on there as far as where the law came from, where the regulation comes from, so that you can access it later on if you need to for further reference in case it leads into a different question. And so of course personal protective equipment, facilities, and things like that, student safety, program safety, and all of that comes into play.

It could also be used from an educator’s standpoint if they have training in CPR, or AED, or the new concussion training that the state requires especially for some of our athlete trainers, and things like that, so that they’re aware of a concussion when a student suffers a concussion, either it be through athletics or not athletics. And so, it’s a tool that can be used that can be put into a file, sort to speak, so that we can keep track of some of the administrator’s training that they’ve had, but also it shows that we’ve done an evaluation, and it’s maybe brought our attention.

There’s sometimes, it’s maybe a simple, minute thing that you maybe, really don’t think about, but for example, a family consumer science classroom that has a traditional oven or a stovetop that most of us have in our residential homes and many scenarios the control knobs are on the back that we would reach across. Well, I actually had a young man one time, he was the quarterback on the JV football team, and after the very first game, the third play of the game, he broke his femur and he was in a wheelchair for six weeks. Let’s take that student and that scenario and now put him in a traditional family consumer science classroom with the knobs on the back. He not able to actually adjust the stove, and it could be hot, there’s a potential for burning, and so definitely you want to make sure that you have at least one ADA compliant stove, one sink, and things like that for that scenario. It maybe that you don’t even have a student that’s currently in a wheelchair or special needs student, but it definitely could fall into that. I’ve had students before that were on crutches, you know unfortunately one of the facilities that I was working at the bathrooms weren’t ADA compliant, they had stairs, the doorways were only 20 inches opening, so they couldn’t even go and use the facilities, they’d have to go to the building next door. And that definitely starts opening up a serious problem as far as accessibility and things like that with our special needs students, so we definitely want to be mindful of that.