



# The 5 Predictable Adult Practices That Strengthen School Safety

## A Trauma-Informed Guide for District Leaders

School safety is more than procedures, hardware, or tactical readiness.

Students experience safety through predictable adults — the way we communicate, respond, and guide them during both everyday routines and high-stress moments. When adults are calm, consistent, and aligned, students feel safer, trust increases, and physical security measures work as intended.

This short guide outlines the five predictable adult practices that strengthen both physical security and emotional safety, forming the foundation of the TIRRA+™ framework.

### 1. Clear, Consistent Communication

Students and staff rely on adults who communicate in ways that are steady, simple, and aligned across the building.

Predictable communication reduces confusion, lowers anxiety, and ensures that safety messages are understood the same way every day.

What this looks like in practice:

- Shared language for drills and daily routines
- Calm, steady tone during transitions and unexpected events
- Clear expectations that don't change from classroom to classroom

When communication is predictable, students feel anchored, and adults feel more confident.

### 2. Calm, Regulated Adult Responses

In moments of stress, students watch adults closely.

A regulated adult response can de-escalate a situation before it grows, while an unpredictable response can unintentionally increase fear or confusion.

What this looks like in practice:

- Adults modeling steady breathing and grounded body language
- Responding to behavior with clarity instead of urgency
- Using trauma-informed phrasing that reassures rather than alarms

Calm adults create calm environments, and calm environments are safer.

### 3. Developmentally Appropriate Guidance

Safety instructions must match the developmental stage of the learner.

Younger students need simple, concrete steps. Older students need more agency and decision-making. When guidance is developmentally aligned, students can act with confidence instead of fear.

What this looks like in practice:

- Age-appropriate drill language (“*This is practice and you are safe*”)
- Clear, simple steps for younger learners
- Gradual progression into high-school-level models like ALICE or CRASE

Developmentally appropriate guidance prevents overwhelm and builds readiness.

#### **4. Emotionally Restorative Routines**

After drills, disruptions, or stressful events, students need predictable routines that help them return to emotional baseline.

Restoration is not an “*extra*”; it’s a core safety practice.

What this looks like in practice:

- Brief post-drill check-ins
- Simple grounding routines
- Opportunities for students to express how they felt
- Staff debriefs that focus on clarity, not blame

Restoration strengthens trust and ensures drills build confidence rather than fear.

#### **5. Aligned Leadership Practices**

Predictable adults require predictable systems.

When leadership teams are aligned, in language, expectations, and communication, staff feel supported and students experience consistency across the entire building.

What this looks like in practice:

- Shared district language for safety actions
- Clear roles during drills and emergencies
- Transparent communication with families
- Leadership modeling the same predictable practices expected of staff

Aligned leadership creates a culture where safety is felt, not just enforced.

### **Why Predictable Adult Practices Matter**

Physical security and emotional safety are not separate systems.

They work together; and both depend on the adults who guide students every day.

Predictable adult practices:

- reduce escalation
- strengthen trust

- improve drill fidelity
- support trauma-informed care
- increase staff confidence
- help students feel safe the same way, every day

They are the foundation of the **TIRRA+™ framework** and the heart of trauma-informed school safety.

## **Next Steps for District Leaders**

If your district is working to strengthen predictable adult practices, we'd be honored to support your next steps.

Our trauma-informed frameworks blend physical security with emotional safety, giving educators clear, developmentally appropriate tools that build confidence, clarity, and trust.

Learn more at [mzsecurityconsulting.com](https://mzsecurityconsulting.com)

or

Schedule a conversation with Mark Zirtzlaff, Founder & CEO, MZ Security Consulting at the following link: [Book Online | MZ Security Consulting](#)