

# M. O. A. T.

## A New Approach to School Security

By Michael Panish  
Door, Lock, & Security Equipment  
Expert & Consultant

The need to have increased security to public venues such as airports, schools, religious facilities, day care centers, shopping centers, and government buildings is nothing new. However, it has become apparent that many unexpected assaults and deadly attacks are coming from individuals that have gained a certain level of intimacy with the venues and organizations that they are invading. The attackers are not necessarily strangers, but people we know.

Prior to the 2012 Aurora Colorado movie theater shooting, where a crazed man entered a movie theatre and began shooting random people, the level of security for that location had probably never been considered substandard. In an entertainment type of environment, theatres are mostly worried about keeping out people that are trying to view the movie for free. In the most recent and tragic events that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, the level of security that was in place could not and did not stop the intruder. From my years of experience providing perimeter enclosures and security to many public buildings and schools, this abhorrent act would not have been stopped with the typical door, window and hardware specified by most school building designs.

Here are a few reasons why security is compromised in schools:

1. Many small towns and some cities attempt to provide a school environment that is believed to be safe and secure. It is with that premise in mind that the community will help self-police the surrounding neighborhood. Many schools, particularly in the elementary grades, encourage active participation of concerned parents to assist the school administration in the daily operations of security of that school. This generally takes the form of parents and school aids working during morning drop off and afternoon pick up duties to keep the children out of traffic. Often, unpaid parents participate in patrolling the school grounds and hallways to improve the overall safety of the school and playground. In most cases, these unpaid volunteers are utilized because the school district simply does not have funds to hire workers to provide those services. Well-meaning PTA organizations often fill this financial void.
2. Most people want to feel as if they are not bringing their children to a locked penitentiary environment. Although some security is offered by perimeter fencing and gates, these systems are more for the purposes of keeping errant balls from the playground from getting into the street than they are for keeping intruders off of the school grounds. Due to the fact that most schools are fairly large in size and lack dedicated security personnel, it is difficult to provide the overall security and monitored lockdown of a facility during many times of the day.
3. Building codes, ordinances, and life safety issues are also responsible for the lower level of building security. Most of the life safety codes dictate that there are minimum requirements for egress from a public building. Specific hardware, doors, and windows must be used to meet these requirements. Architectural designs of older and new school buildings do not always make it easy to integrate an adequate security program without some special considerations. In many new school buildings, although the overall desire is probably to provide a safe and secure environment, costs often dictate the lower quality hardware and door components that are ultimately installed. In some cases, the desire to create a truly secure and safe environment for the students becomes derailed by the high costs of the actual requirements to accomplish this goal.

Security of most public buildings and schools can create a loss of personal freedom. Parents and students utilizing these facilities are going to have to relinquish the carefree open environments that were common

place many years ago, and realize that safety and security of the students will take away that idealized past. There are many proven techniques that can and must be implemented to provide more appropriate and higher levels of security for the schools throughout the country.

M.O.A.T. is an acronym created by Michael Panish in December of 2012, in order to promote a higher level of school security systems and student safety. In medieval times, a moat was constructed around a castle, fort, or town, and was typically filled with water as a defense against attack. Creating a defensive buffer between the outside world and our children has become necessary. Michael Panish, door, hardware, and security expert witness, has developed a formulaic method that will be invaluable in developing needed additional security for our country's school systems.

In very basic terms, the building blocks of Michael Panish's M.O.A.T. program follow these four main areas of planned defense:

- M: More robust doors, windows, locks, hardware, checkpoints, and security systems
- O: Observation and monitoring by policy, and overt surveillance equipment systems
- A: Administrative plans and procedures
- T: Training for staff, students, and parents

It is with these ideas in mind that Mike Panish is offering the following services:

- Inspections and analysis of existing site conditions
- Consultation and assistance in developing increased safety plans
- Creation of Specifications of new Products
- Oversight of facility upgrades
- General construction and project management

Michael Panish is a unique and highly qualified expert in the field of door, lock and hardware security. He has provided and installed products to hotels, hospitals, restaurants, schools, airports, county and state office buildings, and commercial buildings such as shopping centers, office buildings, and most retail venues. Mike has been retained as the consulting and testifying expert in hundreds of legal cases throughout the United States. He has participated in testimony and trial in cases involving invasion, robberies, rape, assault, murder, and security of premises. He is retained as forensic analyst, expert witness, and consultant for Plaintiff, Defense, and Cross Defense equally. Mike is available to consult and assist any organization wishing to develop a safer environment. More information on Mike Panish and his services can be found at [www.ConstructionWitness.com](http://www.ConstructionWitness.com).