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Columbine principal, student safety advocate backs Idaho's KISS plan

Frank DeAngelis, who led the Colorado high school hit by the nation's first mass K-12 school shooting, says Idaho is on the right track for keeping our students safe.

DeAngelis, a nationally recognized school safety advocate who spoke at the Family Community Engagement Conference (FACE) in Boise Oct. 8, learned about Keep Idaho Students Safe during Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra's overview of the plan at FACE.

"I was impressed with how Superintendent Ybarra's initiative helps students thrive by addressing local safety and security concerns," said DeAngelis, who talked with the superintendent after her speech and offered to do whatever he can to advance Keep Idaho Students Safe (KISS). He is submitting a guest opinion about KISS to media throughout Idaho.

DeAngelis retired from Columbine High School in 2014 and has made it his life's mission to protect kids by stopping further school violence. He was principal of Columbine in April 1999 when two heavily armed students opened fire, killing 13 and wounding 20 before killing themselves.

"There have been lessons learned, and what encourages me is people are coming together to come up with plans to keep our students safe," DeAngelis said.

Superintendent Ybarra's student safety initiative, which opened for stakeholder feedback in March, aims to identify and prevent negative behaviors such as bullying, suicide and violence. A key element is an investment to support local school leaders to improve security through grants to meet district-specific needs. The initiative also will provide a safety training course for school staff and a state crisis prevention counselor to help local school personnel identify and stop at-risk behaviors. The plan also includes a statewide tip line that was recently fully funded through a federal grant. To fund the other pieces, the superintendent will ask the Legislature in January for a \$20 million investment in school safety.

For more information on Keep Idaho Students Safe, go to the [State Department of Education website](http://www.sde.idaho.gov).

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Editors, reporters: A copy of the DeAngelis guest opinion is attached.