

UNPACKING THE SILENCE

How education funders
engage with school violence



QUICK-START GUIDE

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why school violence is hard to name

... for the methods used in this
report

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landscape around school violence

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into practical steps on school safety

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School violence is a major issue: we know it happens, and we know a lot about how to reduce and respond to it. School violence is also a barrier to learning, yet it receives limited visible attention from education philanthropy.

You - a community of philanthropic education funders – see the effects in your portfolios, but the issue is rarely named directly or discussed in the global spaces where education funding coordination happens. This report examines why this gap exists, what you already fund that contributes to safer schools, and the common philanthropic archetypes that shape how funders approach this issue. We conclude by recommending practical steps any education funder can take to address this visibility gap without changing core strategy.

This study began in response to a gap raised by several IEFG members and Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG) members. To investigate, we analysed the language used in more than a hundred documents, and conducted eleven interviews. The report is exploratory rather than comprehensive, but some patterns emerge clearly. More education funders than anticipated at the start of this study do back efforts to reduce violence, although you usually do so under broader terms like ‘safe learning environments’, ‘school climate’, ‘well-being’, or ‘whole-child approaches’. These terms help manage relationships with government and boards, but they also distance portfolios from the evidence base on violence prevention and response. This creates a visibility gap. Education funders seem absent in global debates, even

though many parts of your portfolios relate to safety. Currently, no philanthropic education funders are consistently recognized as champions on this issue.

Interviews point to several pressures that shape this pattern. School staff often assume that naming violence too directly will strain government partnerships and that boards prefer progress narratives. Many believe child protection actors are responsible for leading on violence, while protection actors expect education funders to take responsibility for what happens in schools. These assumptions limit how openly we talk about safety and how clearly expectations are signaled to partners.

The analysis identifies several practical steps we can take. These include:

- » making safety an explicit part of grant conversations; inviting partners to share concerns without fear of reputational consequences;
- » supporting basic risk assessments;
- » coordinating more actively with child protection and safeguarding actors.

These actions strengthen existing portfolios within the scope of existing strategies.

A second set of findings concerns philanthropy itself. Based on our interviews, funders follow a series of distinct reasoning patterns, shaped by common underlying logics. These archetypes influence how you define success, interpret evidence, manage risk, and respond to different forms of language. Our final section gives you tools to work with these differences, identify potential champions, and collaborate more effectively across the IEFG community.

The report does not call for a new campaign on school violence. Instead, it calls for clarity, alignment, and deliberate attention to safety in the work you already fund. Your portfolios contain the building blocks of safer schools. With clearer expectations, stronger coordination, and language that matches your own logics, education philanthropists can support school safety more directly and confidently while remaining within existing mandates.

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Education funders care about safe schools, yet school violence rarely appears in direct language within philanthropic portfolios or in the global spaces where policy influence takes shape. The gap became visible during the first Ministerial on Ending Violence Against Children in 2024, where school violence was a central theme but education funders were largely absent. Several IEFG members, ECFG members, and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) noted the same pattern in other settings. They pointed out that we know school violence is widespread, that it affects learning directly, and that there is a well-established evidence base for prevention and response. They also observed that education philanthropy, which often takes on niche or difficult issues, had no clear presence in these discussions. This raised a simple question about why a topic that sits inside schools and affects learning receives so little visible attention from our community.

This report began as a response to that gap. Members asked whether the absence reflects limited engagement, limited visibility, or a difference in language. They also asked for practical guidance on how funders could integrate evidence-based approaches without changing core strategy. The study draws from eleven interviews and a review of more than a hundred public documents. It is exploratory. The aim is to identify patterns that can help IEFG members understand each other's reasoning and improve coordination.

Here we answer two practical questions for IEFG members:

1

Do education funders in this community work on school violence, and if so, where in their portfolios does this work sit?

2

What does this pattern of engagement reveal about philanthropic reasoning, including the logics, incentives, and archetypes that shape decisions?

The first purpose of this report is to clarify how education funders currently engage with school violence and what prevents clear visibility. The findings show that many funders do support activities that reduce violence, although these activities often appear under broader labels such as safe learning environments or school climate. These terms help manage government and board relationships. But they also limit open discussion of harm, reduce grantee reporting, and create gaps between portfolio language and the evidence base. At present, no philanthropic education funder serves as a consistent champion in the global conversation on school violence, which leaves the issue without a clear place inside education philanthropy. This report identifies practical steps you can take to strengthen existing work, including naming safety more clearly in grant conversations, supporting basic risk assessments, and coordinating with child protection and safeguarding actors.

The second purpose of this report is to explain how philanthropic reasoning shapes this pattern. The analysis identifies logics and archetypes that influence how funders understand problems, evaluate evidence, and decide whether an issue fits inside an education mandate. These archetypes help explain why funders who support similar work use different language, make different assumptions about government and board reactions, and respond to different types of evidence. They also show where collaboration is natural and where it is strained. The Logic and Barrier Matrix and Archetype Profiles included in this report provide tools for working across these differences and for identifying potential champions within the IEFG community.

This report does not call for a new agenda. It calls for clarity, alignment, and more intentional use of the tools you already have. School safety can strengthen any education portfolio when expectations are clearer, language is more consistent, and funders engage one another with a shared understanding of how philanthropic reasoning works.

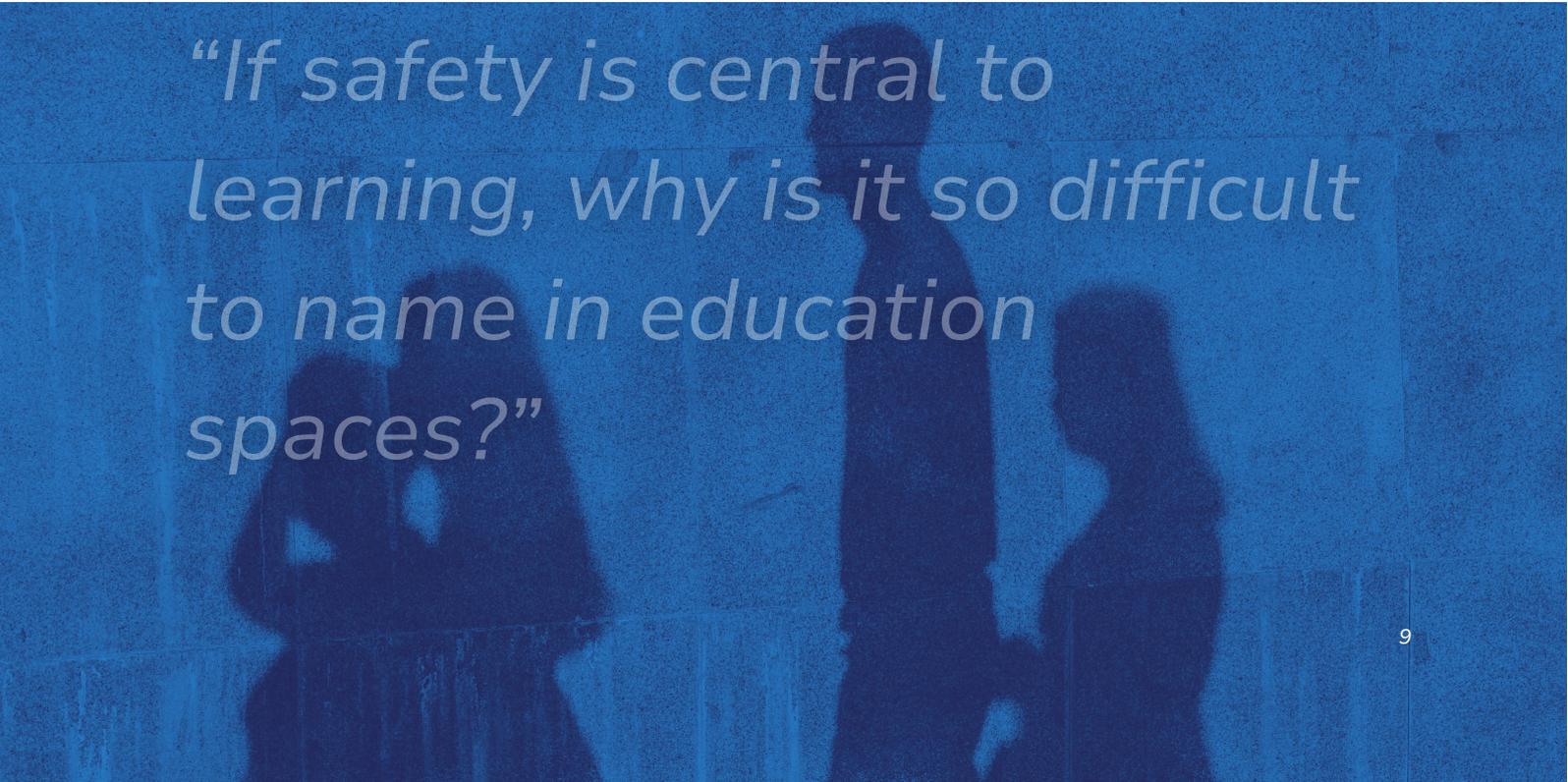
In this report, Part 4, *Findings: The Language Landscape*, shows a visibility gap where school violence appears or disappears in public language. Part 5, *Findings: Institutional Logics, Barriers, Archetypes*, examines what sits beneath those patterns, identifying the forces and structures that shape how you understand school violence in relation to education. Lastly, in Part 6, *Strategic Directions*, we develop a set of frames that can support more direct, safer engagement with school safety.

PART 2

WHY SCHOOL VIOLENCE IS HARD TO NAME

Education funders recognize that safety affects learning, attendance, and teacher wellbeing, yet in many portfolios and global for the word 'violence' rarely appears . It sits behind broader terms such as 'safe learning environments', 'school climate', or 'well-being'.

This section explains why that happens and why it matters for your work. It sets out the core problem in simple terms before the report moves into methods and detailed findings.



“If safety is central to learning, why is it so difficult to name in education spaces?”

2.1 SAFETY AS A PRECONDITION FOR LEARNING

Safety is one of the conditions that enable learning. Global estimates suggest that up to 1 billion children experience some form of violence each year (WHO, 2020), and survey data indicate that school settings are a common site of that harm. UNICEF's global school violence datasets show that around one in three students aged 13 to 15 reports being bullied, and about one in three experiences physical fights in or around school (UNICEF, 2018). Studies on corporal punishment across multiple regions also suggest that more than 60 percent of children live in countries where it remains lawful in schools (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment, 2021).

Research links these forms of violence to specific educational consequences. Multi-country studies show associations between exposure to violence and lower attendance, reduced concentration, weaker foundational learning outcomes, and higher risk of dropout (UNESCO, 2020; Center for Global Development, 2025). Evidence also shows that teachers working in threatening or punitive environments report higher stress, lower job satisfaction, and higher absenteeism (UNICEF Office of Research, 2020). These findings were summarized in our education evidence briefing prepared for philanthropy's representatives at the 2024 Ministerial on Ending Violence Against Children, which drew on global datasets, WHO evidence reviews, and multi-country evaluations of school-based interventions. Together, they point to a clear problem, with measurable consequences for education systems.

1 BILLION

Global estimate of number of children who experience some form of violence each year, (WHO, 2020). Survey data indicates school settings are a common site of that harm.

1 in 3 children aged 13-15

report being bullied, according to UNICEF's global school violence datasets, and 1 in 3 experience physical fights in school.

60%

Percentage of children living in countries where corporal punishment remains lawful in schools (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment, 2021)

20% - 50%

Reduction in incidents of violence in trial settings after interventions such as positive discipline training, whole-school climate interventions, improved classroom management, peer-support models, and strengthened reporting and referral mechanisms (WHO, 2016; UNICEF, 2018, Center for Global Development, 2024)

Evidence on reducing violence in schools

Research indicates that schools can reduce violence when they adopt evidence-based approaches. Evaluations from South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America show that structured programs have been successfully piloted across regions, and align with the evidence that interventions such as positive discipline training, whole-school climate interventions, improved classroom management, peer-support models, and strengthened reporting and referral mechanisms can reduce incidents of violence in trial settings by 20 to 50%, depending on the context (WHO, 2016; UNICEF, 2018, Center for Global Development, 2024). Several studies also document associated gains in attendance, student engagement, and teacher wellbeing when violence declines. The Center for Global Development has over the past few years consistently highlighted not only the scale of this issue but that mitigation and response actions exist, that they have been successfully piloted across regions, and that they align with tools and approaches education funders already use.

Summary

The problem of school violence is widespread, the educational consequences are well documented, and effective solutions have been tested in diverse systems.

School violence is therefore a natural concern for education philanthropy. It affects the outcomes you already track and the reforms you already support.

2.2 WHY FUNDERS STRUGGLE TO NAME VIOLENCE

We have shown why safety matters for learning and why school violence should sit naturally inside education portfolios. Yet a clear puzzle remains: if the issue is central to learning, why is it so difficult to name in education spaces?

This section uses early insights from our analysis to outline the institutional pressures that shape how you talk about violence, helping you understand why naming is difficult, why violence appears under other terms, and why the issue requires careful, deliberate framing inside education philanthropy.

Across interviews, people described a consistent pattern. Staff recognize that school violence affects learning, but many feel they cannot name it directly in education spaces. Several interviewees said that colleagues avoid the word and default to softer terms.

As one staff member at a foundation put it:

““ We would have referenced school violence, but it was coming through frameworks and policies around what it means to create a safe school. ””

Four recurring pressures often shape these choices.

2.2.1 Government sensitivity to language

Interviewees described concern that the word violence sounds accusatory to governments and education officials. They expect that explicit language about violence will be read as a claim that ministries are failing in their core duties, which can make conversations harder.

A multilateral education specialist noted that:

““ ...the word violence scares educators... it doesn't connect somehow to the outcomes that the ministry is trying to achieve... some forms of violence are culturally normalized.” A staff member at a foundation added, “We've just been overly cautious... trying to figure out what you can talk about and how you can talk about it... Protecting that reputation... we don't want to jeopardize that situation. ””

These expectations shape how you frame issues for policy dialogue. Many interviewees said they lead with learning outcomes, climate, or wellbeing to keep ministries engaged, even when the underlying concern is violence.

2.2.2 Board caution and reputational risk

Program staff also described internal risk considerations. They worry that direct language about violence will trigger board anxiety about strategic drift, liability, brand, or negative publicity.

A program officer foundation explained:

“ Our trustees really see the issue areas as pretty separate... we don't co-fund with other programs... Once we start broadening, where do you stop? ”

Staff from another foundation were even more explicit about board reactions:

“ We can't take something to [the Board] that sounds like we're accusing governments of harm. It's reputational suicide. ”

People in these roles described a simple calculation. They believe that boards will support work labeled as wellbeing, inclusion, or safeguarding. However, they may question or slow proposals that use the word violence or sit outside their core education mandate. This pushes language choices toward 'safer' terms, even when staff see the same underlying problem.

2.2.3 Portfolio boundaries and ownership gaps

Several interviewees stressed that violence does not neatly fit within existing portfolio structures. They described situations where education teams focus on learning, while protection or safeguarding units hold formal responsibility for abuse and harm.

An analyst and researcher summarized the structural effect of this division:

“ None of the funders... have really been interested in funding... any work in this space... if it was gender violence, it would have made it so easy... narrative does matter. ”

From the philanthropy side, one program officer noted that:

“ ...every foundation has an education team and a protection team, the issue sits in [the cracks] between them. ”

The statement “every foundation” may be conversational hyperbole, but the message is clear.

These comments suggest that many of you experience violence as a cross-cutting concern that falls between budget lines and reporting structures. When no unit feels responsible, the safest move is often to reframe it inside existing categories such as climate, SEL, or wellbeing.

2.2.4 Sector assumptions about who leads

Finally, interviewees described a shared assumption that child protection actors should lead on violence, while education funders should concentrate on learning outcomes. This assumption is strongest around response work, but it can spill over into how prevention is framed.

A multilateral specialist described the split clearly:

“ Structurally, we’re set up to view them separately... and that doesn’t help us to see it as one issue.” From the intermediary side, a participant explained that “Safe Schools versus violence prevention... same thing, very different outcomes.”

These views show how responsibility can be passed back and forth. Education actors expect protection colleagues to handle violence as a rights or safeguarding issue. Protection actors expect education funders to take responsibility for what happens in schools. In practice, this can leave you funding relevant work under general headings like 'safe learning environments,' while no one is named as a clear champion for school violence itself.

2.3 EUPHEMISTIC LANGUAGE IN PRACTICE

Because of these pressures, most funders describe related work through indirect terms. Across the public documents reviewed, language such as safe learning environment, positive school climate, student well-being, SEL, inclusive and supportive schools, or whole-child approaches is common. Direct references to violence, abuse, or harm are rare.

These terms often reflect genuine commitments to better schools and healthier learning environments. They help you maintain stable relationships with governments, boards, and partners. They also make it easier to integrate safety into broad reform agendas.

At the same time, this language can blur the difference between general school improvement and specific efforts to prevent or respond to violence. It can make it harder to connect portfolios to the evidence base on violence. It can also reduce the visibility of safety work in global conversations. From the outside, education funders can appear disengaged from school violence, even when many of your grants touch it indirectly.

2.4 WHY NAMING MATTERS FOR EDUCATION PHILANTHROPY

This gap between concern and language has practical consequences.

- » It creates a visibility gap. When you rely on broad terms, other actors cannot see where education philanthropy is engaging on violence or where gaps remain.
- » It weakens evidence use. Research on school violence uses explicit language and specific indicators. When portfolios use different terms, it becomes harder to draw on that evidence or show how your work relates to it.
- » It obscures internal incentives. Staff navigate government expectations, board risk, and portfolio constraints daily. When language is indirect, it becomes harder to see how those incentives shape decisions about what fits inside an education mandate.
- » It limits championship. Without clear language, it is difficult for any one of you to take on a role to champion school safety.

For these reasons, the way we name school violence affects how portfolios are designed, how evidence is used, and how coordination happens. It also reveals the internal reasoning patterns explored in later sections of the report.

On to the evidence



In this section we summarised why, in a field that cares about learning, school violence is hard to name in clear language. The problem is structural and institutional rather than a matter of individual will.

The next section, *Methods*, describes how we examined these issues. It outlines the documents and interviews used, the coding framework, and the methods we used to derive the institutional logics, barriers, and archetypes that appear later in the report. This methodological foundation shows how the patterns described here were identified and how they relate to the decisions you make in your own portfolios.

PART 3

METHODS

This section explains how we generated the findings in this report. It describes the data sources, analytic steps, and limitations that shape the results.

“Analysing documents and interviews...”

The background of the bottom half of the page is a solid blue color. Overlaid on this are the dark blue silhouettes of several people, likely in a meeting or collaborative work environment. One person in the foreground is seen from the side, looking towards the right. Another person is partially visible behind them, and a third person is on the far right, also in profile. The silhouettes are semi-transparent, allowing the blue background to show through.

3.1 DATA SOURCES

The analysis draws on three inputs:

Public documents

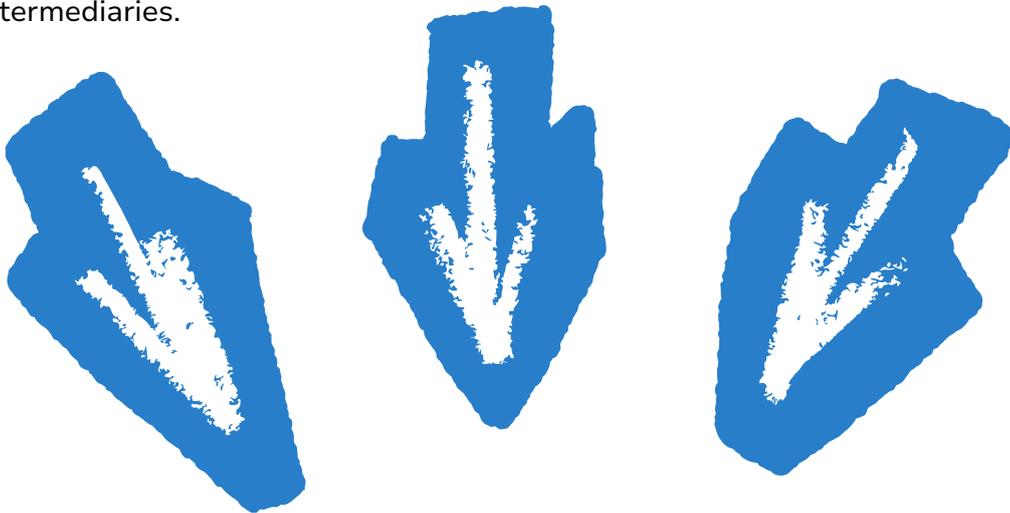
We analysed more than one hundred public documents, including grant descriptions, strategic plans, evaluations, blogs, and speeches from foundations, multilaterals, and intermediaries.

Recorded interviews

We conducted eleven confidential interviews. Six with staff from education philanthropy organizations, and five with school violence leads across bilateral funders, multilateral organizations and research/practice organizations.

Informal expert conversations

We held four conversations with network staff and field experts to check emerging patterns. These were not used for quotations.



This corpus allowed us to map how school violence appears in public language and how staff describe the decisions and constraints behind that language.

3.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND LEXICAL MAPPING

In the initial phase of our research we examined how organizations refer to violence and safety in public materials. These are the methods we used.

1. Collection and extraction

We gathered more than one hundred files from about thirty organizations. A Python script extracted text from PDFs and webpages and stored it with organization labels.

2. Lexicon construction

We built a lexicon of explicit, euphemistic, and adjacent terms related to violence and safety. Terms were identified through sample reading, automated keyword scans, and manual refinement.

3. Term frequency scan

We ran regex-based searches across all documents to count each lexicon term. These counts were aggregated by document and organization.

4. Theme × Organization Matrix

We used proportional maps to show where explicit language appears, where it is replaced with broader terms such as safe learning environment or wellbeing, and where it is absent.

5. Theme coding

Documents were coded into ten thematic families, including language and framing, evidence and measurement, funding structures and risk, and trust and partnerships.

3.3 INTERVIEWS

Once we had analysed the language of how organizations refer to violence, we investigated why these patterns persist. These are the methods we used.

» **Sample**

Eleven interviews with program staff from foundations, multilaterals, and intermediaries.

» **Focus**

Interviews examined how staff think about violence in relation to learning, how they navigate government and board sensitivities, how they interpret evidence gaps, and how portfolio boundaries affect naming.

» **Supplementary conversations**

Four informal expert conversations were used solely for triangulation.

These interviews provide the basis for the report's analysis of institutional logics, barriers, and archetypes.

3.4 CODING FRAMEWORK AND ANALYTIC STEPS

We analyzed documents and interviews using the following coding process:

1. Thematic families

We applied the ten thematic families across documents and transcripts to capture recurring concerns.

2. Barrier types

We coded for four barriers: cognitive, structural, political, and resource.

3. Lexical and discourse analysis

We combined term counts with close reading to understand how euphemistic, explicit, and adjacent terms cluster with themes and barriers.

4. Logic identification

We coded interview segments where participants explained how they define relevance, assess evidence, or interpret internal or external risk. These segments formed eight institutional logics.

5. Logic × Barrier Matrix

Each coded segment was placed in a matrix linking logics to barriers. This shows how reasoning patterns interact with structural and political constraints.

6. Archetype derivation

We compared the Logic × Barrier Matrix with the Theme × Organization Matrix to identify clusters of organizations that share similar reasoning patterns. These clusters form the report's four archetypes.

This framework links descriptive patterns from documents to the internal incentives described by staff.

3.5 LIMITATIONS

The study is exploratory. It has four constraints:

- » The interview sample reflects actors in international networks.
- » The analysis relies on public documents and interviews; internal grant data were not available.
- » The corpus is primarily in English.
- » Interviews represent informed perspectives but remain self-reported.

Convergence between document patterns and interview accounts increases confidence that the findings reflect structural dynamics rather than isolated views.

How this section links to the findings

Our methods support the two aims of the report, to investigate how school violence appears in philanthropic language, and how internal logics and incentives shape those choices.

PART 4

FINDINGS:

THE LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE

This section asks a simple question. When you and your peers talk about safety and learning in public documents, what language do you actually use, and where does 'violence' disappear? This section summarizes those descriptive patterns. It focuses only on public language, not on what you actually fund.

The corpus includes more than one hundred public documents from around thirty organizations, including foundations, multilaterals, and intermediaries. These documents cover strategies, program descriptions, evaluations, blogs, and public statements. In this phase of our research, we scanned this corpus for three families of terms:

- » explicit terms, such as school violence, abuse, corporal punishment, bullying
- » euphemistic terms, such as safe learning environment, school climate, well-being, socio-emotional learning (SEL), positive discipline
- » adjacent terms, such as safeguarding, child protection, mental health, resilience

Together, these terms provide a map of how school safety appears in public language and where violence itself is named or avoided.

“...you often act on safety [...] but in public language, you rarely centre the word violence...”

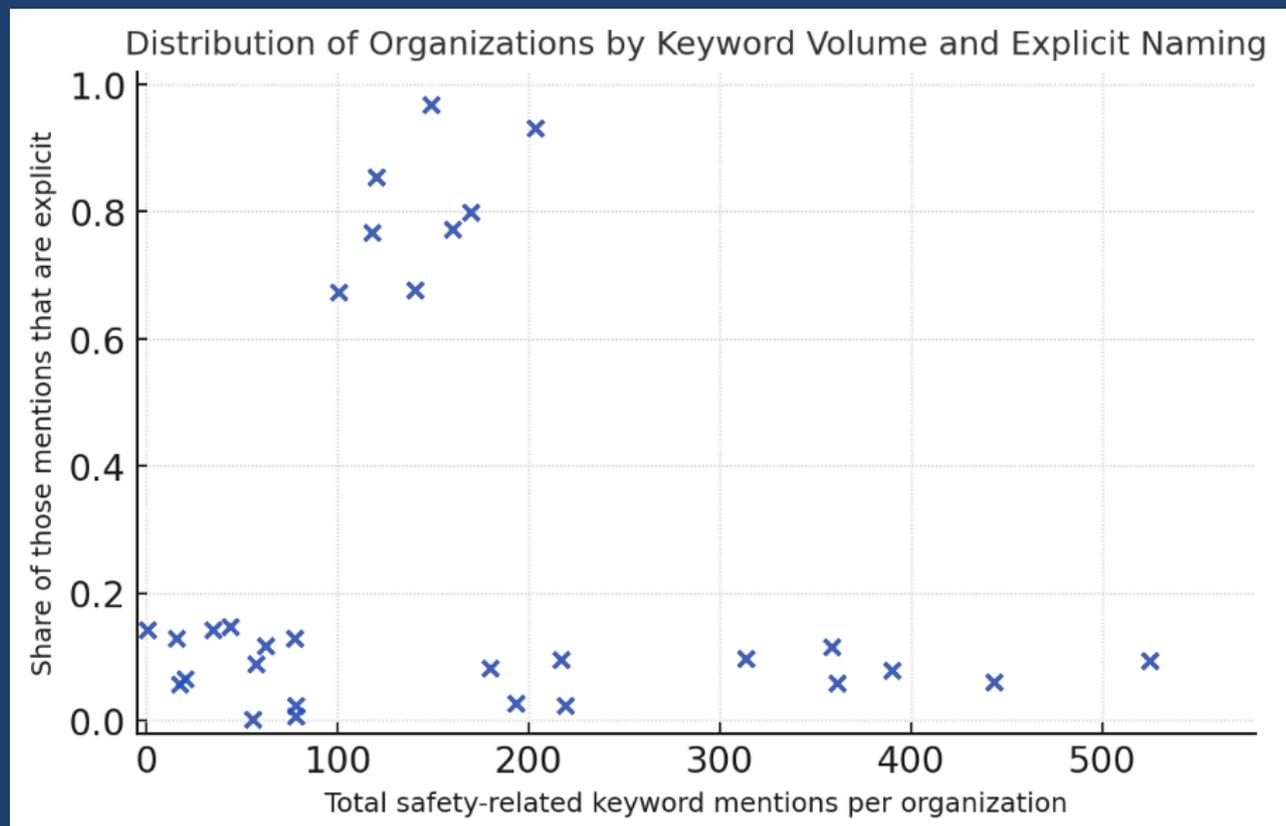
4.1 OVERALL PATTERN: ACTIVE FRAMING, CAUTIOUS NAMING

Across the corpus, safety is not absent. Most organizations refer to safety, inclusion, or protection in some form. What is less visible is the direct naming of violence in schools.

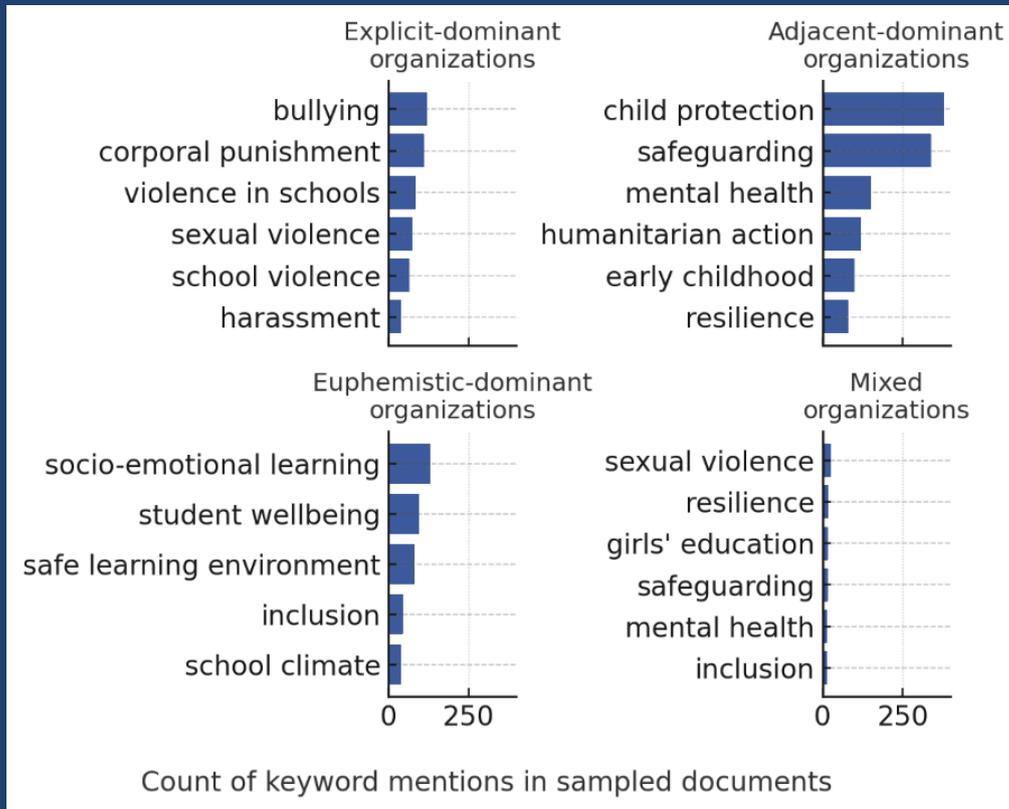
The keyword scan shows that adjacent and euphemistic terms dominate. Words like child protection, safeguarding, mental health, resilience, and safe learning environment appear more often than direct references to violence, abuse, or harm. Many organizations use dozens or even hundreds of adjacent or euphemistic terms and only a small number of explicit ones.

The scatter plot below of “Keyword Volume vs Explicit Naming” illustrates this pattern. Some organizations sit in the upper-middle space, with a high share of explicit keyword mentions. Others sit in the lower right quadrant, with extensive mention of safety-related terms but very few explicit references to violence. A third group has low total engagement and almost no relevant terms. This makes it difficult for others to see who is actively engaged with school violence in their portfolios and who is relatively silent.

These patterns reinforce a core finding: you often act on safety through programs and partnerships, but in public language, you rarely centre the word violence itself.



4.2 EUPHEMISMS AND ADJACENT FRAMES



The lexicon scan highlights a small set of phrases that carry most of the weight in public language:

“ socio-emotional learning or SEL ”

“ student well-being or learner well-being ”

“ safe learning environment ”

“ positive or enabling school climate ”

“ safeguarding ”

These terms appear across funder and multilateral documents, often as part of broader quality or inclusion agendas. For example, several foundations describe investments in ‘positive school climate’ and ‘student well-being’ as key contributors to learning outcomes. Multilaterals and intermediaries refer to “safe learning environments” and “child protection systems strengthening” as pillars of sector reform.

In these documents, explicit language about violence, abuse, or corporal punishment is less frequent. Even when violence is the central concern in background evidence, the public description of the program often relies on the broader terms listed above. This pattern is strongest where documents describe system-level reforms, sector plans, or high-level partnerships with government.

The result is a pattern of language in which safety is present, but the forms of harm students and teachers experience are often implied rather than named. In several strategies we reviewed, it was possible to read long sections on safe learning environments without seeing the words violence in schools, corporal punishment, or sexual abuse.

Together, these patterns show that safety appears frequently in education documents, even when violence itself is not named. They show that funders use different sets of terms to describe similar concerns, creating an uneven and difficult-to-interpret public language landscape. To make sense of this variation across organizations, we grouped documents into broad descriptive categories based on the balance of explicit, euphemistic, and adjacent terms. This typology does not assess intent or quality. It provides a simple way to compare how you and your

peers talk about safety in public discourse and to see where visibility gaps begin to form.

4.3 TYPOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONAL LANGUAGE STYLES

To make sense of these differences, we grouped organizations into five descriptive categories based on the share of explicit, euphemistic, and adjacent terms in their documents:

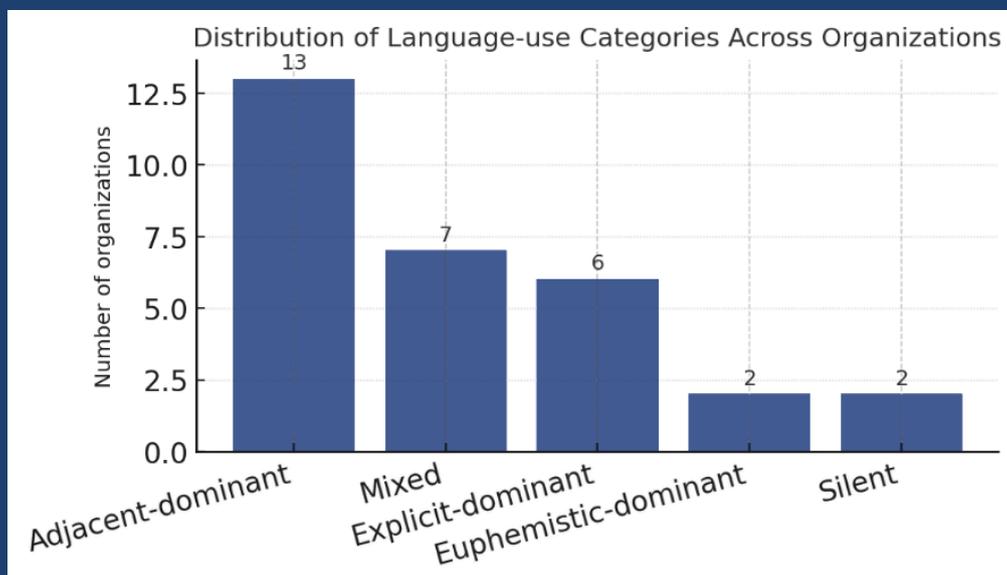
- » **Explicit-dominant organizations**, where most safety-related keywords are explicit, for example, bullying, corporal punishment, sexual violence, and school violence
- » **Euphemistic-dominant organizations**, where broad terms such as SEL, student well-being, safe learning environments, and positive discipline account for most mentions
- » **Adjacent-dominant organizations**, where language concentrates on child protection, safeguarding, mental health, humanitarian response, or gender-based violence, with few direct school-violence references

» **Mixed organizations**, where no single category accounts for most mentions and documents alternate between explicit, euphemistic, and adjacent terms

» **Silent organizations**, where the scan finds almost no relevant terms

The typology distribution shows that adjacent-dominant organizations are the largest group in this sample. Mixed organizations and explicit-dominant organizations follow. Only a small number of organizations are euphemistic-dominant, and a small number appear silent in this document set.

This typology is descriptive. It does not judge which language style is preferable. It shows that you and your peers adopt recognizably different approaches to naming safety concerns in public documents. Later sections of the report connect these language styles to internal reasoning patterns. Here, the focus remains on what appears on the page.



4.4 SECTOR VARIATION: PHILANTHROPY, MULTILATERALS, INTERMEDIARIES

The language patterns vary across types of organizations.

Foundations

Many foundations in the corpus fall into the **adjacent-dominant or mixed** categories. Their public documents often highlight child protection, safeguarding, or gender-based violence when they describe risks to children. At the same time, the same documents may refer to school climate, SEL, or well-being when they discuss education outcomes. Direct references to school violence, corporal punishment, or abuse are less common and usually concentrated in specific initiatives rather than portfolio-wide strategies.

Multilaterals

Several multilaterals fall closer to the **explicit-dominant or mixed categories**. When they publish global reports on violence against children or safe schools, the language is more direct. Terms like violence in schools, corporal punishment, bullying, and sexual violence appear frequently, often in connection with survey data or global indicators. However, when these agencies describe education sector plans or large-scale reform programs, language again shifts toward safe learning environments, school climate, and inclusion.

Intermediaries and networks

Intermediary organizations and networks that work on standards or coordination often sit between these patterns. Many emphasize child protection and safeguarding frameworks and use a mix of explicit and adjacent terms. Their public documents are more likely to contain

explicit references to violence within technical guidance, while still using broader language in advocacy pieces that target ministries and funders.

These differences matter for coordination. When different parts of the ecosystem emphasize different terms, it becomes harder to see where efforts align on violence prevention and where gaps remain.

4.5 PATTERNS OF OMISSION

We have examined where violence disappears from public language. Several forms of omission are common.

Topic-specific silence

A small set of organizations appears silent across the entire lexicon. Their education documents focus on learning outcomes, access, or systems strengthening, **without using any safety-related terms** in the lexicon. This does not mean they never fund safety-related work, but it signals that safety is not part of their public framing of education priorities.

Partial silence

Other organizations mention violence in one part of their portfolio but not in others. For example, a foundation might use explicit terms in a report on gender-based violence, yet describe its main education strategy only in terms of foundational learning and well-being. Multilaterals may publish global reports on school violence, while their country strategies focus only on safe learning environments. These splits make it difficult to infer from public documents whether violence is treated as a core education concern or as a separate topic.

Form-specific silence

Some forms of violence, such as corporal punishment, appear infrequently even in organizations that name violence in general terms. Bullying and gender-based violence appear more often than physical punishment by teachers, despite research that links corporal punishment to negative learning and well-being outcomes. This section does not assess why these patterns appear. It only records how often different forms of harm are named in this

document set. Across these patterns, the central point is simple. Violence is more common in research and survey data than in the public vocabulary of many educational organizations. The documents describe safe learning environments and inclusive schools more often than they name harms. The influence of this silence varies. Some of the organizations in this group are relatively small, while others play visible roles in global education debates. When larger or more influential actors do not reference safety in their public framing, the absence carries more weight because these organizations often shape sector priorities, funding narratives, and the language used in global guidance.

The point here is not to assess their intentions. It is to note that silence from prominent institutions makes it harder for others to see where leadership in school violence might sit.

4.6 THE VISIBILITY GAP

These language patterns create a visibility gap for school violence inside education philanthropy and related networks.

From a distance, it is hard to tell which organizations see violence as an education issue and which do not. Our document scan shows that some organizations use large amounts of safety-related language while avoiding explicit terms. In contrast, others name violence directly but appear less often in broader education debates. A few organizations appear almost absent from the safety lexicon in this document set.

This gap has three practical effects for your work:

1. Coordination

When adjacent and euphemistic terms dominate, it becomes difficult for you to identify potential partners in school violence from public documents alone. An organization that is very active in addressing violence may appear, on paper, like one that focuses on general well-being or SEL.

2. Evidence use

Most research on school violence uses explicit language and specific indicators. When portfolios rely on broader terms, it becomes harder to connect program language to this evidence base or to track progress against it.

3. Perception of engagement

Because explicit terms are rare, education funders as a group appear less engaged on school violence than they are. Public strategies and statements seldom foreground violence, even though many

grants focus on safety, inclusion, or protection.

This section does not suggest that funders must use any single term. It shows that present patterns make your engagement harder to see, both to peers in education philanthropy and to partners in child protection and safeguarding.

The visibility gap has three practical effects for your work

4.7 WHY FURTHER ANALYSIS WAS NEEDED

Part 4, Findings: The Language Landscape, mapped how school safety is discussed in public discourse. It showed that documents use a wide range of euphemistic and adjacent terms, that explicit references to violence are unevenly distributed across organizations, and that a visibility gap emerges as a result.

This research cannot, on its own, explain why these patterns persist. The documents do not show how you and your colleagues weigh risks, respond to board preferences, interpret evidence, or decide whether a topic fits inside an education mandate.

The next section addresses those questions. We turn to interviews with staff at foundations, multilaterals, and intermediaries to understand the internal logics and constraints that sit behind the language described here. Together, the two phases of our research connect what appears in public text with how you reason about violence and safety in your day-to-day work.

PART 5

FINDINGS:

INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS, BARRIERS, CONSTRAINTS, ARCHETYPES



The previous section described a visibility gap around school violence in public language. This section examines what sits beneath those language patterns. It draws on interviews and cross-references them

with the document corpus to understand how you explain the gap and why explicit references to violence feel difficult in education spaces.

This is the point in the story where we move from what the language looks like to why that language feels necessary. We will look at:

- » the institutional reasoning that shapes how you talk about school violence
- » how you decide whether addressing school violence fits inside an education mandate
- » whether attention to safety in public language translates into decisions about action (while noting that this study did not analyse grant documents.)

“...silence is a system outcome...”

This section will identify the institutional logics and barriers that influence how staff understand school violence in relation to their portfolios. It then shows how these patterns cluster into archetypes. It also identifies a set of frames that can support more direct and safer engagement with school safety. The aim is to clarify the internal dynamics that make explicit naming difficult, even when you already fund work that touches on safety.

This analysis reflects insights from this sample. It is exploratory and not a comprehensive map of the field. The findings point to structural and institutional dynamics described by interviewees, not conclusions about all funders.

Across this sample, silence around school violence appears to stem from how staff balance mandates, evidence norms, operational boundaries, and risks. Interviewees described being cautious in sensitive contexts. One participant said their organization had been “overly cautious... trying to figure out what you can talk about and how you can talk about it.” Staff recognize how violence affects learning but work within constraints that limit how directly they can name it.

These findings reveal how silence is a system outcome in this sample. It shows how reasonable logics, operating under specific barriers, make it difficult to name violence directly in education spaces even when portfolios already address related concerns.



5.1 KEY INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS

Across these interviews, we identified a series of distinct institutional logics; patterns in how staff justify decisions about relevance, risk, and boundaries. Most organizations hold several at once.



1. Evidence-First Logic

You prioritize issues with strong, comparable, and quantifiable indicators. Interviewees noted that current evidence on school-related violence is often perceived as “largely correlational,” which philanthropy leadership view as weak ground for investment. When indicators are limited, this logic pushes violence out of focus.



2. Education-First Logic

You ask whether an issue belongs in an education mandate. Violence enters only when it is clearly linked to attendance, learning, or teacher performance. “It didn’t connect... in my results chain... that if we address this, there will be less drop out, better attendance, and children will be able to learn.” This protects portfolio coherence but narrows what counts as education work.



3. Scale-Pressure Logic

You prefer interventions that can scale across systems with simple, replicable models. “Boards and family members are looking for... costed interventions with scale potential.” Several interviewees described violence as harder to scale because it presents differently across contexts. “Translating that visibility into large-scale interventions now is where we’re struggling the most.” Under this logic, issues that appear context-specific or sensitive are often deprioritized.



4. Systems-Integration Logic

You look for a visible ‘home’ in ministry structures, policy frameworks, or budget codes. “Safe to Learn... connects it to foundational learning, which is the outcome the ministry definitely recognizes as its mandate.” Without a home, violence feels less system-relevant even when everyone agrees it matters. “You need people who understand how education systems work, not just a technical solution, but really how to shift it within a ministry.”

5. Rights-Based Logic

You prioritize issues with strong, comparable, and quantifiable indicators. Interviewees noted that current evidence on school-related violence is often perceived as “largely correlational,” which philanthropy leadership view as weak ground for investment. When indicators are limited, this logic pushes violence out of focus.

6. Trust-First Logic

You foreground community knowledge and lived experience. Interviewees emphasized that school actors and families already have clear definitions of safety, though these forms of evidence are difficult to standardize for large-scale funding decisions.

A note on what did not surface

Several interviewees spoke about risk, mandate, and measurement. They did not explicitly name underlying social norms as a driver of silence. However, practitioners in adjacent violence prevention fields have raised in other fora a different possibility: that normalization of certain harms, including gendered expectations and ‘inevitability’ narratives, can operate beneath institutional reasoning and may not be voiced directly in education donor settings. This report cannot treat that dynamic as a finding from this sample, but it is a plausible background factor worth testing in future inquiry.

These logics are reasonable on their own terms. The dynamics shift when they meet specific barriers.

Brand-Risk Logic

You assess how explicit language will play with boards, donors, and the public. One interviewee described “protecting that reputation... in [country]... we don’t want to jeopardize that situation,” illustrating how naming violence can feel risky in sensitive partnerships.

8. Resource-Constraint Logic

You work within limited resources, staffing and management bandwidth. “We have a good amount of funds, but not unlimited... what can we do... with [several hundred million] a year?” Issues that sit between teams or require coordination are seen as harder to absorb. Even when funders are sympathetic, staffing and bandwidth constraints prevent new investment areas. In this logic, violence is often kept implicit inside broader work on climate, inclusion, or well-being.



5.2 THE BARRIERS ACTING ON INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS

Interviewees described four barriers that shape how these logics operate. These barriers convert logic into silence.

1. Political barrier

Concern about how ministries or government partners will interpret explicit language. “There are things we cannot say in some contexts, especially when ministries are sensitive.” Explicitly naming violence can be seen as accusing officials of failing in their duties. “You can’t walk in and say, ‘You’re failing to protect children.’ That would be seen as blaming... and you lose the room.”

2. Evidence and measurement barrier

Gaps in indicators and limited evaluation norms. One interviewee explained that “there is not a culture of qualitative... evaluation... research is very quantitative... [so] we do a 20-question survey, and I’m not measuring... behavioral change”. Without measurable indicators, it becomes harder to justify naming violence.

Interviewees described a practical measurement barrier shaped by uncertainty about indicators and limited confidence in qualitative evidence within education portfolios. Since these interviews, the violence against children field has continued to strengthen shared definitions and statistical classifications, including UNICEF’s International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC). The issue, therefore, is less the absence of tools than uneven awareness, translation, and integration of these tools into education monitoring and evaluation systems.

3. Reputational barrier

Fears of triggering board anxiety or donor discomfort. One interviewee described an anonymous “donor that only wanted... the... physical upgrades to schools. We were doing the softer side... in our reporting”. Sensitive issues are reframed to avoid scrutiny.

4. Operational / portfolio-boundary

Internal divisions between education and protection teams, fixed strategy cycles, and thematic silos. Interviewees described issues “sitting in the cracks” between teams, with no clear owner. Without an internal home, violence is often placed under broader categories.

These barriers do not act alone. They intersect with logics to shape naming practices in this sample.



5.3 MAPPING BARRIERS TO LOGICS

In this phase of our research we grouped barriers into underlying types of constraint, and mapped each coded interview segment to the logic behind the reasoning and the types of constraints described. The resulting matrix shows how silence is produced when logics meet specific constraints.

Patterns in this sample include:

- » Evidence-First logic, under the evidence barrier, treats limited indicators as a reason to avoid naming or tackling violence.
- » Systems-Integration logic, under operational barriers, reads the absence of a policy or ministry “home” as a reason not to elevate the issue.
- » Rights-Based logic, under political barriers, softens language to keep government partners engaged.
- » Brand-Risk logic, under reputational barriers, shifts toward broad terms like “safe schools.”

The matrix is diagnostic, not evaluative. It explains how reasonable decisions, under pressure, lead to indirect language.



5.4 GROUPING BARRIERS INTO CONSTRAINT TYPES

We have described these barriers so far using practitioner-facing language that reflects how funders experience constraints in day-to-day decision-making.

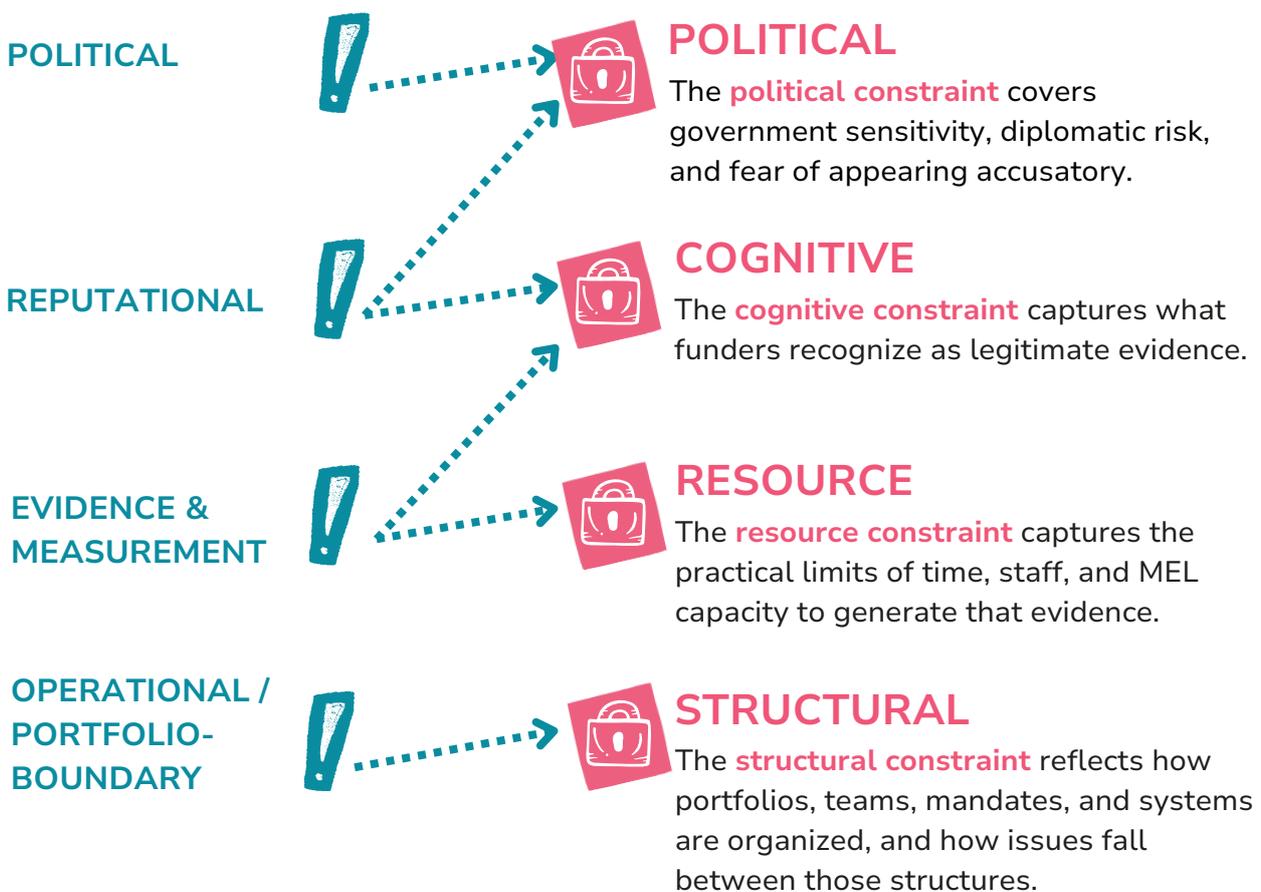
In the following Logic x Constraint Matrix, we group those barriers into types of **constraint**: four analytic categories with similar underlying analytic constraints: cognitive, structural, political, and

resource. These constraint types standardize how barriers were coded across interviews, allowing patterns to be compared across different institutional logics.

Where a barrier maps to more than one constraint type, this reflects how constraints operate simultaneously in practice.

BARRIER

CONSTRAINT TYPE



5.5 LOGIC X CONSTRAINT MATRIX



Core mechanisms shaping silence across the philanthropic ecosystem

EVIDENCE-FIRST LOGIC

CONSTRAINT TYPE	Mechanism	Interpretation	Strategic Leverage
Cognitive	Treats what cannot be quantified as non-actionable.	Violence drops out because suitable indicators are missing.	Frame violence as part of existing system indicators (attendance, climate).
Structural	No structural home in MEL systems for violence.	Systems exclude what they cannot categorize.	Add light-touch safety indicators to existing MEL tools.
Political	Avoids politically risky claims without data.	The lack of data poses a diplomatic risk.	Pair qualitative insight with admin data for low-risk entry.
Resource	No bandwidth for new measurement instruments.	Instrument development is too resource-heavy.	Provide off-the-shelf, small modules for existing surveys.

EDUCATION-FIRST LOGIC

CONSTRAINT TYPE	Mechanism	Interpretation	Strategic Leverage
Cognitive	Categorizes violence as “not education” unless tied to learning.	Violence is cognitively sidelined.	Reframe as prerequisite for learning conditions.
Structural	Portfolio boundaries exclude protection themes.	Violence displaced to other departments.	Link safety to instruction & teacher effectiveness.
Political	Direct naming triggers ministry defensiveness.	Fear of harming partnerships.	Use teacher climate and well-being as safe entry.
Resource	Feels like an added priority competing with learning.	Scarcity frames violence as a trade-off.	Position violence reduction as protecting learning investments.

SCALE-PRESSURE LOGIC

CONSTRAINT TYPE	Mechanism	Interpretation	Strategic Leverage
Cognitive	Assumes violence doesn't scale cleanly.	Context variation is perceived as a barrier.	Offer modular, universal safety components.
Structural	Large programs need uniformity.	Violence seen as structurally incompatible with mass delivery.	Embed safety routines into large climate programs.
Political	Avoids upsetting governments in multi-country portfolios.	Political stability outweighs specificity.	Use climate and environment framing.
Resource	Scale demands speed; complexity is costly.	Depth loses to scale pressure.	Create light-touch safety add-ons to scalable reforms.

SYSTEMS-INTEGRATION LOGIC

CONSTRAINT TYPE	Mechanism	Interpretation	Strategic Leverage
Cognitive	If it has no "home," it's unseen.	Violence doesn't map onto system categories.	Position as core to system quality.
Structural	Ministries lack units for violence.	No unit → no mandate → no budget.	Embed safety in leadership, PD, supervision.
Political	Risk of appearing to interfere cross-ministerially.	Territorial boundaries suppress uptake.	Use alignment framing with ministry priorities.
Resource	Integration perceived as major reform.	Imagined as resource-heavy.	Promote incremental embedding into existing reforms.



RIGHTS-BASED LOGIC

CONSTRAINT TYPE	Mechanism	Interpretation	Strategic Leverage
Cognitive	Moral clarity eclipses complexity.	Oversimplifies operational realities.	Tie rights to teacher practice & system routines.
Structural	Structural Rights frames live outside delivery systems.	Advocacy & delivery become disconnected.	Convert rights aims into system language.
Political	Rights naming feels accusatory to governments.	Blame perception closes doors.	Use “right to learn in safety” vs. “rights violation.”
Resource	Advocacy teams lack implementation capacity.	Can name problems, can’t deliver solutions.	Can name problems, can’t deliver solutions. Pair rights actors with system implementers.



TRUST-FIRST LOGIC

CONSTRAINT TYPE	Mechanism	Interpretation	Strategic Leverage
Cognitive	Prioritizes lived experience over formal evidence.	Prioritizes lived experience over formal evidence. Evidence undervalued for scale.	Pair community insight with mixed-method data.
Structural	Relational work doesn’t fit in logframes.	Structurally invisible.	Partner with system actors to translate value.
Political	Naming violence can endanger local partners.	Political exposure suppresses speech.	Use dual-advocacy models (community + system).
Resource	Community orgs operate on fragile budgets.	Underfunded despite effectiveness.	Support translation partnerships for larger grants.

BRAND-RISK LOGIC

CONSTRAINT TYPE	Mechanism	Interpretation	Strategic Leverage
Cognitive	Avoids naming what can't be measured.	Responsibility risk suppresses accuracy.	Use positive framing (safety, climate).
Structural	Avoids formalizing politically sensitive issues.	Structural commitment = reputational exposure.	Frame as "positive environment strengthening."
Political	Political Fear of appearing accusatory.	Diplomatic self-protection.	Use shared, non-blame frames.
Resource	Small comms teams can't manage sensitive messaging.	Lack of comms capacity leads to avoidance.	Use pooled or network-messaged communication.

RESOURCE-CONSTRAINT LOGIC

CONSTRAINT TYPE	Mechanism	Interpretation	Strategic Leverage
Cognitive	Complexity exceeds available cognitive bandwidth.	Cognitive overload deprioritizes violence.	Provide simple safety indicators ("plug and play").
Structural	No capacity to restructure portfolios.	Structural rigidity crowds it out.	Fit violence into existing structures.
Political	Limited staff means avoiding political issues.	Scarcity amplifies political caution.	Use low-risk school climate framing.
Resource	Important but unfunded.	Necessity loses to saturation.	Promote micro-pilots and pooled funding.

Which constraint type should practitioners prioritize?

This study cannot produce a universal ranking of constraints across the field. It can, however, offer a bounded signal from this sample: political sensitivity was the most consistently described constraint, because it affects what can be said to ministries, what can be written publicly, and what is perceived as accusatory. Evidence gaps and operational boundaries also mattered, but they were often discussed as problems that become harder once political risk is activated.

5.6 CROSS-CUTTING INSIGHTS

Five cross-cutting insights emerge from the matrix and interview accounts. All are grounded in patterns from this sample.

1 Euphemistic language is a risk management strategy

Interviewees described being “overly cautious... trying to figure out what you can talk about and how you can talk about it”. Indirect terms such as “school climate” or “safe learning environment” help manage political and reputational risks.

2 Audiences shape language choices

Different logics respond to different audiences.

- » Evidence-First and Scale-Pressure logics respond to boards, ministries, and evaluation units.
- » Rights-Based and Trust-First logics respond to communities and advocacy partners.
- » Brand-Risk logic responds to media and donor sensitivities.

Interviewees described adjusting language depending on who would read or hear it.

3 Internal systems matter as much as preference

Operational and portfolio-boundary barriers shape what can be named. As one participant noted, existing tools were “not measuring... behavioral change,” so relevant outcomes “just [don’t] capture” the safety-related shifts their programs produced. When systems cannot record changes, naming the issue becomes harder to justify.

4 Fit within education portfolios is ambiguous

Interviewees described uncertainty about where violence fits. Without a clear team, strategy line, or sector plan entry point, staff fold safety concerns under broader categories such as climate or well-being. This helps explain why violence appears indirectly in many documents in this sample.

5 Gender rarely surfaces as an explicit analytic lens in education donor reasoning in this sample.

Interviewees discussed school violence primarily through mandate fit, political risk, evidence standards, and portfolio ownership. They did not consistently frame safety through gender, patriarchy, or differential exposure for girls, boys, and gender non-conforming students. This absence should not be read simply as oversight. It likely reflects a set of structural incentives: gendered violence is often seen as more politically sensitive, more accusatory to institutions, and more clearly located within protection or rights mandates than education ones. Explicit gender framing can therefore trigger boundary defenses, risk escalation, or responsibility displacement to specialist teams. The result is that many funders act on gendered harms indirectly through climate or wellbeing frames, which can enable engagement but also obscure who is affected, how power operates, and which prevention approaches are required.

Across these insights, the underlying point is that silence reflects institutional reasoning under constraint, not lack of concern.



5.7 EMERGENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL ARCHETYPES

When the Logic × Constraint Matrix is read across organizations, distinct clusters emerge. Certain logics tend to appear together under similar barrier types. These clusters function as archetypes.

The report describes these four archetypes as:



SYSTEMS ENGINEER



EVIDENCE BROKER



RIGHTS ADVOCATE



COMMUNITY STEWARD

These archetypes describe reasoning styles that appear across this sample. The same organization may shift between archetypes depending on team, partnership, or context.

Archetypes are helpful because they turn a complex analytic pattern into a tool for practice. They help you see:

- » why interviewees respond differently to the same language
- » where framings resonate or fall flat
- » which partnerships are naturally complementary



5.8 ARCHETYPE NARRATIVES

This subsection summarizes how each archetype appeared in this sample. These narratives draw on repeated patterns rather than isolated statements.

Archetype Summary Table: How Logics Cluster Under Institutional Pressure

Archetype	Primary Logics	Dominant constraint type	Core Priorities	Why Silence Occurs
Systems Engineer	Systems-Integration; Scale-Pressure	Structural; Political	System alignment; feasibility; clear bureaucratic homes	Violence appears structurally homeless and politically sensitive
Evidence Broker	Evidence-First; Scale-Pressure	Cognitive; Political; Resource	Data quality; comparability; measurable impact	Lack of indicators makes naming violence risky and hard to justify
Rights Advocate	Rights-Based; Education-First	Political; Structural	Child rights; dignity; moral clarity	Rights language triggers defensiveness and lacks operational pathways
Community Steward	Trust-First; Resource-Constraint	Political; Resource	Community insight; relationships; lived experience	Naming violence endangers local partners and exceeds available capacity

5.6.1 SYSTEMS ENGINEER ARCHETYPE

- » Language use: Speaks in terms of alignment, integration, and system coherence. Uses broad terms such as 'school climate' or 'child-friendly schools'.
- » What they notice: Where an issue sits in ministry structures, sector plans, and policy frameworks.
- » What they avoid: Issues without a clear structural home or budget line.

How they approach safety: They support safety when it can be embedded in quality improvement or management reforms.

5.6.2 EVIDENCE BROKER ARCHETYPE

- » Language use: Focuses on indicators, results, and measurable outcomes. Talks about attendance, learning gains, and behavior indicators.
- » What they notice: Data quality, attribution, and comparability.
- » What they avoid: Issues lacking clear metrics.

How they approach safety: They engage when safety can be measured inside existing MEL systems.

5.6.3 RIGHTS ADVOCATE ARCHETYPE

- » Language use: Centers obligations and protections. Uses terms tied to freedom from harm and equity.
- » What they notice: Gaps between commitments and lived reality, especially for marginalized groups.
- » What they avoid: Framings that feel overly technocratic. They also adjust their language in politically sensitive contexts to avoid defensiveness.

How they approach safety: They are natural allies for naming harm directly when paired with partners who can support political navigation.

5.6.4 COMMUNITY STEWARD ARCHETYPE

- » Language use: Leads with community voice, relationships, and lived experience.
- » What they notice: Informal norms and everyday dynamics. Interviewees described contexts where “teachers and parents were the main perpetrators,” requiring teams to work “directly with the perpetrators to get them on board”.
- » What they avoid: Highly standardized or top-down models that do not account for local realities.

How they approach safety: They support whole-school and community approaches. They need partners who can help with system integration or evidence framing.

These archetypes help explain why single frames rarely resonate across actors in this sample.





5.9 FRAME RESONANCE MATRIX

The Frame Resonance Matrix shows which language aligns with each archetype and where shared vocabulary exists.

Archetype	Resonant Language	Credible Evidence	Bridge Framing (How to Connect School Violence)
Systems Engineer	Effective pedagogy, learning climate, system efficiency, education outcomes	RCTs, longitudinal data, KPIs, government pilots	Violence = “barrier to learning quality and teacher performance.” Embed in system-strengthening initiatives.
Evidence Broker	Justice, dignity, safety as a right, gender equality, child protection systems	Mixed-methods case studies, UN/INGO reports, qualitative stories	Violence = “human-rights obligation within education systems.” Link to equity and policy reform.
Rights Advocate	Learning continuity, efficiency, value for money, evidence-based intervention	Impact evaluations, meta-analysis, cost models	Violence = “disruption reducing learning gains.” Frame as risk management for education investment.
Community Steward	Community-led, local voice, participation, resilience, healing	Participatory research, narrative documentation, case vignettes	Violence = “breakdown of community trust in schools.” Frame as collective healing and local ownership.

Patterns in this sample include:

- » Systems Engineers and Evidence Broker archetypes respond to frames that link safety to learning outcomes, attendance, and teacher performance, and that can be measured.
- » Rights Advocates and Community Steward archetypes respond to frames that name harm clearly and respect local definitions.
- » Interviewees across archetypes described the value of whole-school framing. One participant noted the importance of “a whole school community approach... including how teachers behave... the social norms, [and] parents...”.

The matrix uses these overlaps to identify bridging frames, such as:

- » 'Safe and supportive schools for better learning.'
- » 'School climate and safety indicators in existing results frameworks.'
- » 'Community-defined safety inside national quality standards.'

These frames help different archetypes engage without stepping outside their mandates and set the stage for the next step in the analysis. They show how the logics, barriers, and archetypes interact in practice and why funders respond to safety in different ways. The following section turns these observations into implications for collaboration, strategy, and internal alignment.

5.10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

The archetypes and logics in this sample do more than describe different styles of philanthropic reasoning. They clarify how incentives, constraints, and decision habits shape what you see, what you fund, and what you feel able to name. Three implications follow.

1 COLLABORATION DEPENDS ON RECOGNIZING ARCHETYPES, NOT CORRECTING THEM

- » **Systems Engineers** bring access to government processes and the tools of system reform. They know how to integrate issues into national plans and policy cycles.
- » **Evidence Brokers** bring discipline, comparability, and cost awareness. They help show how attention to safety strengthens learning outcomes and investment logic.
- » **Rights Advocates** bring moral authority and policy legitimacy. They ensure that safety is understood as a duty, not an optional quality label.
- » **Community Stewards** bring relational depth and contextual knowledge. They understand how learners and communities experience safety, and they hold evidence that cannot be captured in standard metrics.

The implication is simple. Collaboration improves when these strengths are treated as complementary rather than contradictory. The goal is not to standardize the field but to build coalitions where each archetype supports a part of the work that others cannot.

2 CONSTRAINTS NEED TO BE NAMED INSIDE STRATEGIES

The four barriers that shape naming practices in this sample are not individual preferences. They are structural. Political caution protects government relations and board confidence. Evidence norms shape what counts as legitimate proof. Portfolio architecture separates education, protection, and safeguarding into different units. Resource limits shape what can be done without new budgets.

When these constraints remain implicit, staff absorb responsibility alone. Naming them inside strategies reduces that burden. It also gives leadership a clearer view of why safety appears under general language rather than explicit terms. A shared vocabulary about constraints creates space for internal alignment and lowers the personal cost of raising safety concerns.

3 ALIGNMENT IS POSSIBLE WITHIN EXISTING MANDATES

Interviewees described several ways to strengthen attention to school safety without creating new programs. Many of those ideas boil down to pairing archetype friendly language by using frames that already resonate inside education philanthropy. Systems Engineers and Evidence Brokers respond to learning continuity and teacher performance. Rights Advocates and Community Stewards respond to duty, trust, and

dignity. When these frames are joined, safety becomes a portfolio enhancer rather than a strategic detour.

Examples include attaching simple safety

4 ALIGNMENT IS POSSIBLE WITHIN EXISTING MANDATES

Interviewees described several ways to strengthen attention to school safety without creating new programs. Many of those ideas boil down to pairing archetype friendly language by using frames that already resonate inside education philanthropy. Systems Engineers and Evidence Brokers respond to learning continuity and teacher performance. Rights Advocates and Community Stewards respond to duty, trust, and dignity. When these frames are joined, safety becomes a portfolio enhancer rather than a strategic detour.

Examples include attaching simple safety indicators to existing tools, building guidance that shows how safety supports system performance, and creating small entry points that help staff raise concerns without triggering political alarm. These steps fit inside current mandates and avoid the need for new funding lines.

Bridge frames are not substitutes for violence prevention. Shifting public language toward ‘school climate,’ ‘conditions for learning,’ or ‘well-being’ can reduce political and reputational friction. But there is a risk of weakening links to the violence prevention evidence base if this shift becomes solely euphemism rather than a translation step. The practical aim is dual: use safer entry frames to maintain access, while keeping internal clarity about which prevention and response approaches those frames are

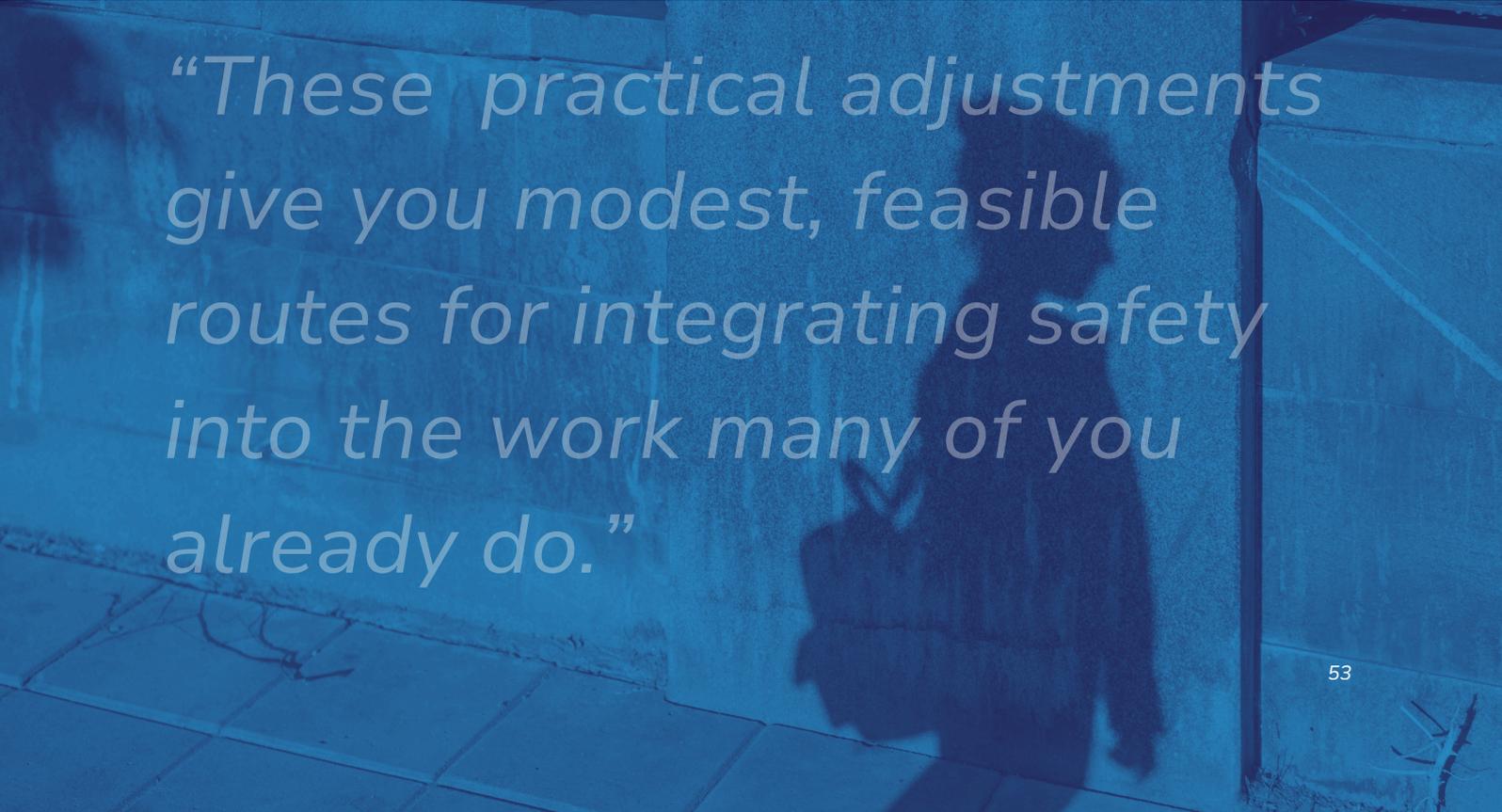
intended to carry. For example, the INSPIRE technical package consolidates evidence-based interventions to prevent and respond to violence against children, many of which are directly relevant to school settings and education portfolios.

Together, these implications set up the next section. They show how funders can act within their existing strategies to make school safety more visible, more measurable, and easier to discuss across the field. The next section turns these analytic insights into practical steps.

PART 6

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

These directions translate the patterns in Section 5 into practical adjustments you can use inside existing portfolios. They are indicative, not prescriptive. They reflect how current language, incentives, and archetype reasoning suggest low risk pathways for integrating safety as a foundation for learning. They are based on interview patterns rather than claims about the entire field.



“These practical adjustments give you modest, feasible routes for integrating safety into the work many of you already do.”

6.1 RECODE

Explicit references to violence can trigger political and board concerns. RECODE provides safer entry points while keeping the substance clear.

ACTIONS

- » Lead with established education frames and link them to safety. This keeps the discussion inside familiar territory and reduces political or board anxiety.
- » Use “safe learning environments,” “school climate,” or “conditions for learning” in public documents, and more precise terms in internal analysis where appropriate. This protects external relationships while keeping the substance clear inside the organization.
- » State directly in internal strategies that safety is part of education quality. This gives staff permission to surface safety issues without fear of strategic drift.
- » Map where current grants already touch safety. This makes the work visible and avoids the perception that a new program line is needed.

RECODE

6.2 TRANSLATE

Different archetypes respond to different signals. TRANSLAE helps you speak in ways that register across these reasoning styles. This is about adjusting how you frame safety so it connects with the logics people already use, rather than persuading them to adopt a new worldview. It draws directly from the patterns in the interviews, where staff described how certain arguments landed and others did not. The aim is to show how to communicate across archetype framing.

ACTIONS

- » For Systems Engineers, frame safety as a system quality concern compatible with ongoing reforms. This helps them see safety as part of the core work of system improvement rather than as a separate agenda.
- » For Evidence Brokers, foreground simple indicators that add little burden. This gives them workable measures that fit within existing monitoring practices and avoid new complexity.
- » For Rights Advocates, connect safety to the right to learn. This positions safety within established commitments and reinforces its legitimacy as an ethical priority.
- » For Community Stewards, emphasize community trust, partner protection, and voice. This meets their focus on lived experience and strengthens the relational foundations of their work.

TRANSLATE

6.3 ALIGN

ALIGN focuses on placing safety inside the tools, reviews, and routines you already use. The interviews showed that most funders do not need new programs to address school safety. They need clearer ways to see how existing work already touches safety and simple adjustments that help staff raise safety concerns without creating tension with boards or ministries. Align gathers these small shifts into one place.

ACTIONS

- » Add brief prompts on safety or climate to concept notes and grant templates. This brings safety into early decision making without creating paperwork.
- » Add light touch safety or climate indicators to existing logframes. This signals that safety matters while keeping reporting manageable.
- » Tag current indicators that already relate to safety. This reuses data you already collect and avoids adding new requirements.
- » Introduce one safety question into investment or risk reviews. This opens the door for staff to raise concerns without escalating them.
- » Use existing safeguarding processes rather than creating new units. This keeps responsibility clear and avoids structural expansion.

ALIGN

6.4 COALITIONIZE

Archetypes have complementary strengths. COALITIONIZE highlights pairings that reflect interview patterns.

ACTIONS

- » Pair Systems Engineers with Community Stewards to ground system oriented work in local practice, grounding system reforms in real school and community experience.
- » Pair Rights Advocates with Evidence Brokers to develop credible and acceptable indicators for boards and ministries.
- » Use IEFG to convene small task groups for shared products or short reviews. This will build practical collaboration without heavy coordination costs.
- » Share examples of cross archetype collaboration during routine meetings, to normalize cooperation and help others see what is possible.

COALITIONIZE

6.5 AMPLIFY

AMPLIFY raises visibility safely. This is about normalizing safety as part of quality, not creating advocacy.

ACTIONS

- » Include “safe learning environments” and “school climate” in routine communications, to raise visibility without shifting core strategy.
- » Share short notes showing how members integrated safety into existing work, providing the field with concrete examples and keeping focus on practical changes.
- » Provide shared tools such as bridge frames and one-page checklists. This lowers the cost of engagement and supports consistent messaging.
- » Host closed peer sessions for testing language and discussing constraints. This creates safe spaces to refine approaches and learn from others.

These practical adjustments give you modest, feasible routes for integrating safety into the work many of you already do.

Taken together, these directions offer modest, feasible routes for making school safety more visible and more workable inside the strategies many of you already use. They respond to the incentives and constraints described in the interviews and treat safety as part of how learning happens, not as an additional program line.

AMPLIFY

CONCLUSION

*“Silence is not a lack of care.
It is a predictable outcome of
how the field is structured.”*

7. CONCLUSION

Silence around school violence is structural. It reflects how education philanthropy manages political risk, defines relevance, and allocates responsibility. Across the interviews and document review, the pattern is consistent. You support work that affects safety, but you describe that work using broader terms because the incentives shaping public language make direct identification difficult.

This report had two main goals. The first was to clarify how funders currently engage with safety. The findings show that you already support activities that influence school climate, teacher well-being, and learning continuity, although these contributions are often implicit. The second goal was to explain how internal logics shape these decisions. The eight logics and four archetypes demonstrate how staff interpret evidence, risk, and mandate, and why similar concerns take different linguistic forms across organizations.

The field now better understands how this silence is created. We can recognize that no single reasoning style or role alone is enough. Systems Engineers focus on structural fit. Evidence Brokers call for credible indicators. Rights Advocates insist on identifying harm. Community Stewards provide grounded knowledge and partner protection. These perspectives work side by side, and this is what keeps safety active in practice but absent in language.

Success for the IEFG community is practical and modest. It means clearer expectations for speaking about safety, more consistent language across

portfolios, and minor adjustments that help staff work within existing mandates. It means recognizing safety as part of educational quality and enabling collaboration across archetypes without requiring any actor to change identity or mission.

We propose a next phase in this process. If members choose to pursue it, the goal would be to test translation tools, run small cross-archetype pilots, and identify which frames and indicators help staff engage more directly with safety. These tests would allow the community to stress-test the insights from this study and determine which approaches strengthen both learning and protection.

The central insight remains. Silence is not a lack of care. It is a predictable outcome of how the field is structured. With clearer language and coordinated support, education funders can name safety with confidence and integrate it into the work they already do.



www.iefg.org



info@iefg.org



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