

Information submitted to Governor's Safety Task Force

March 19, 2018

We have tried in West Chester to take a holistic approach to this very serious problem, addressing both prevention and mental health concerns. This needs to be the focus at the state and federal level. We continually review and update our safety procedures, training, and equipment, as well. Safety and security truly are top priorities; however, there are limited resources available to school districts due to limits established by Act 1 of 2006.

Here are some suggestions on what the state can do:

1. Allow for an Act 1 exception for school security and safety.
2. Charge a 2% tax the sale of guns and ammunition in order to generate revenue to be used for school security. Currently there are taxes on tobacco products to address health care and smoking cessation, taxes on Internet access to provide e-rate funding reductions for schools to provide internet access to students.
3. Provide additional funding for mental health and emotional disorders.
4. Pass legislation to limit attorney fees for parents in special education lawsuits. Our special education costs have gone up 15% each of the last three years because of paying \$500 and \$600 per hour in parent attorney fees as part of special Ed due process hearings. Our attorney fee costs are between \$185 and \$200 per hour. This savings could be directed toward programs to help with emotional support and mental health services.
5. Continue with PAnCon reimbursements - the two-year moratorium on construction reimbursements has slowed down our renovation plans. As we renovate buildings, we include additional safety features such as double locked entrances with better camera visibility.

Here are some of the things that we done, using the limited resources we have due to Act 1:

- \$300,000 annual cost - Started a mental health program at our high schools three years ago, providing extra mental and emotional support for students who face discipline and/or behavior issues, and provide a crisis support counselor at each high school for students who are in crisis.
- \$250,000 annual cost - Adding mental health specialists at our middle schools for the 2018-19 school year
- \$180,000 - Added additional security cameras at our high schools
- \$160,000 annual cost - Added Raptor security check in system at each of our 16 buildings.
- \$400,000 - annual cost for local police departments to provide five school resource officers to cover all 16 schools.
- \$700,000 - onetime cost to provide updated phone system for better 911 access and "all-call" capability for every room.

- \$500,000 - installations of repeaters in school buildings to provide enhanced radio access and reception for all police departments in the county. This was done because of radio frequency changes made at the county level.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jim Scanlon, Superintendent

West Chester Area School District