

**West Chester Area School District
Safety Advocacy Committee – Update on Progress
September 1, 2018**

PHYSICAL PLANT SAFETY MEASURES

ACTION	UPDATE
<p>1. Require all staff to take part in Emergency Management and Active Shooter Training such as ALICE or FEMA. Currently all administrators have been trained and active shooter drills are practiced with all staff in coordination with local police.</p>	<p><i>All staff to be trained for 3 hours in emergency management and active shooter drills.</i></p>
<p>2. Establish one point of contact for safety and security measures in the school district. The school district has established an excellent working relationship with its local police departments and multiple people have safety responsibilities. Given the size of the district (17 buildings, and more than 12,000 students), there should be one point of contact overseeing and constantly evaluating safety procedures.</p>	<p><i>School board approved a new position of supervisor of security. We expect to make an appointment at the August 27 Board meeting.</i></p>
<p>3. Expand the number of surveillance cameras to the schools. Currently, web-based cameras are used at the three high schools, and every school has an external camera to identify visitors prior to entering a building. Additional cameras should be considered for the three middle schools. Consider providing police access to these cameras.</p>	<p><i>60 cameras have been installed at the three middle schools.</i></p>
<p>4. Additional safety and security presence should be considered for the schools. Currently the four local police departments provide five school resource officers assigned to be visible in the schools. The committee discussed a full time security officer in each of the three high schools with three others available to patrol the feeder middle and elementary schools to each respective high school.</p>	<p><i>Proposals have been received by a security firm to provide armed or unarmed guard at each high school. Discussion has been taking place with police chiefs about providing additional police officers at each high school. No final decision will be made until supervisor of security is approved.</i></p>

ACTION	UPDATE
<p>5. Vestibules with lockdown capabilities should be considered. As the district renovates its schools, it is redesigning entrances to include double locking doors at the entrances. Consideration should be given to add security film to these areas.</p>	<p><i>Two buildings are being renovated with security entrances as part of design.</i></p>
<p>6. Escape windows should be considered for first floor classrooms. The district has been including breakaway escape windows in classrooms of renovated buildings. Consideration should be given to install additional windows in first floor classrooms.</p>	<p><i>Breakaway windows are being installed as buildings are renovated. Two renovations have been taking place this summer.</i></p>

PROGRAM SAFETY MEASURES

The committee discussed various programs to help students, teachers and parents address stress and anxiety in the lives of children. The following six priority findings were identified:

ACTION	UPDATE
<p>1. Expand mental health services to the middle schools. The school district started a high school mental health program for students three years ago and is considering an expansion to middle school for the 2018-19 school year.</p>	<p><i>All three middle schools will have a mental health therapist. Starting date is August 21, 2018.</i></p>
<p>2. Extend program similar to Second Step at the MS level. Second Step is an elementary program started three years ago to help students with social skills and executive functioning skills that are developmentally appropriate. While each of the three middle schools has procedures in place to address peer mediation and bullying, consider expanding to a formal program at the middle schools.</p>	<p><i>Middle school staff will be reviewing and developing a consistent anti-bullying program during the 2018-19 school year.</i></p>

ACTION	UPDATE
<p>3. Develop a class to allow students to talk about stressors, create the forum for students to talk, and teach strategies for students to use prior to escalating actions to violence or name calling. Consider ways to build this time into the regular school day schedule such as: an elementary fifth special time, middle school unified arts rotation, or high school course, or intervention schedule.</p>	<p><i>We are working with Dr. Lou Bevilacqua on developing an elective course at the high school in the area of reducing stress. Elementary and middle school staff will be discussing ways to incorporate programs such as Second Step, peer conflict managers, and mediation sessions into the schedule.</i></p>
<p>4. Establish sessions for parents on the topic of anxiety, reducing stress, and information about anti-bullying programs taking place in the district. The school district has been offering sessions to parents on the topics of teen stress and anxiety; consider adding a section to the website for parent access to resources; provide additional training on the Second Step program.</p>	<p><i>The District Attorney’s office scheduled a parent meeting on September 25, 6:30 pm. at East HS on the topic of identifying risky behaviors. Parent sessions will be scheduled on the topics of reducing anxiety, stress, and suicide awareness.</i></p>
<p>5. Establish a student-mentoring program. The school district has established formal protocol to identify students at risk, and provides referrals to services. Consider assigning staff to students to develop a relationship.</p>	<p><i>While no “formal “mentoring program has been started, student survey data will be reviewed with staff on the topic of relationship building.</i></p>
<p>6. Create an anonymous reporting system to identify possible students at risk. The district has been conducting violence and suicide risk assessments for the past two years, but referrals are made by staff and parents. Consider establishing a hotline for anyone to report students who may be in need of a risk assessment.</p>	<p><i>Pa General Assembly passed a law to establish a hotline to report students at risk. We are waiting for more information on this hotline.</i></p>

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

The committee discussed legislative changes that have been taking place in other states. The following six priority findings were identified:

ACTION	UPDATE
<p>1. Encourage Pennsylvania legislators to model some of the legislation in Massachusetts. Massachusetts established a commission to make recommendations for safe schools legislation. Massachusetts Safe and Supportive Schools Commission can be viewed here.</p>	<p><i>Pa General Assembly passed a law (Act 44) to establish a safe schools commission. Final report is due in October.</i></p>
<p>2. Encourage Pennsylvania legislators to establish a safe schools fund similar to that in Massachusetts HB No 1082. This Act establishes a community safe school fund. The bill outlines how the fund would be established, contributions made, and what the fund can be used for. This may provide language needed to address funding issues in Pennsylvania.</p>	<p><i>Pa General Assembly allocated \$60 million in a safe schools fund. School districts were eligible to submit proposals. WCASD submitted grants in the amount of \$70,000 to pay for equipment, police services, and programs.</i></p>
<p>3. Parents and Educators should consider working with legislators to pass laws that allow local school boards to increase property taxes for safety and security measures. Currently, Act 1 of 2006 limits tax increases to a complicated cost of living formula. There are two exceptions to the formula: cost for sate mandated pensions, and excess costs for special education. Consideration should be given to add a third exception for school safety. Representative Mark Mustio has introduced legislation to do this. Legislation about this exception for school safety can be viewed here.</p>	<p><i>No law has passed yet, but some legislators have signed on to Rep. Mustio’s bill.</i></p>
<p>4. Legislators should consider imposing a tax on gun sales, creating a gun registration fee, or increasing the fee for background check as a way to create revenue for a safe schools fund. The state of Pennsylvania needs to look for alternative revenue sources to fund school safety initiatives. This is one possible way to do this.</p>	<p><i>No bills have been introduced on this topic.</i></p>

ACTION	UPDATE
<p>5. Legislators should consider passing laws that provide funding or tax breaks for mental health resource providers. More time and money is needed for mental health services. Psychologists agree that with the onset of ubiquitous social media, young people are feeling more anxious than ever and more teens are suffering with mental health conditions. These services can help to prevent violent acts from taking place in our schools and communities.</p>	<p><i>Legislation has been proposed to allow tax credits to agencies that provide mental health services.</i></p>
<p>6. Legislators should consider passing laws that make it more difficult for teens to access guns.</p>	<p><i>No new laws have passed.</i></p>

SCHOOL FUNDING

The Funding sub-committee reviewed several grant opportunities and ways in which funding can be provided for programs, and physical plant changes for safety. The following priority findings were identified:

ACTION	UPDATE
<p>1. Explore PDE Grant Opportunities – The PA Department of Education offers Safe Schools Grants from \$20,000 to \$60,000 to pay for security upgrades and/or school resource officers. These are competitive grants and are subject to available funds each year.</p>	<p><i>WCASD submitted grants in the amount of \$70,000 to pay for equipment, police services, and programs.</i></p>
<p>2. Explore Federal Grant Opportunities – Sites such as www.grants.gov offer funding opportunities for programs such as mental health awareness training grants</p>	<p><i>No grants have been identified. The administration is planning to review a grant that can be submitted with local police departments.</i></p>
<p>3. Explore Local/Community Grant Opportunities – consideration should be given to partner with townships to share resource officer costs, and community donations to fund safe schools initiatives.</p>	<p><i>No grants have been identified yet.</i></p>

ACTION	UPDATE
<p>4. Investigate the Stop School Violence Act of 2018 –This is a federal law, passed in March, 2018 that allows for opportunities to create an anonymous reporting systems for threats of school violence, implement improvements to school security infrastructure, and develop student, teacher and law enforcement training to prevent violence</p>	<p><i>Pa General Assembly passed a law to establish a hotline to report students at risk. We are waiting for more information on this hotline.</i></p>
<p>5. Expand Scope of West Chester Area Foundation or create new Foundation to allow for contributions. The Education Foundation’s mission is to make meaningful connections between school curriculum and the world of work. Perhaps the Foundation can establish a fund for contributions made that would provide for a tax deduction for contributors with money allocated directly to school safety initiatives. We should also consider working with other local Foundations to support funding for safe schools initiatives.</p>	<p><i>This idea has not yet been explored.</i></p>

Estimated Budget Summary for Initiatives taking place in summer, 2018

New phone system in all 18 buildings	\$700,000
Mental health specialists at middle schools	\$ 250,000
Security supervisor (Pa school code now requires each school district to name a single point of contact for school safety.)	\$ 80,000
Middle school cameras	\$75,000
Installation of repeaters in buildings to provide enhanced radio access for all police departments in the county	\$600,000
	\$1,705,000

Committee Members Participating in the Safety Advocacy Committee Report

Physical Plant safety measures

Karen Adams	Mike Meiswich
Kevin Campbell (facilitator)	Elisha Ozer
Paul Chambers	Donna Ryan
Jonathan Cleck	Joan Ryan
Robyn Conroy	Alicia Smith
Tammi Florio	Alex Soutos
Ed Fordyce	Tricia Stevens
Carl Harper	Michael Stitley
Brian Kirk	Joy Vining
Daniel Leicht	Michael Wagman
John Maylath	Janey Wolff
Collin Meisenhelter	

Program safety measures

Lou Bevilacqua	Leigh Ann Ranieri (facilitator)
Diana Brannon	Bill Reiche
Loretta Cohen	Saradha Sriram
Judi Di Fonzo	Janet Stretch
Kathy Einthoven	Jennifer Teneza
Ben Green	PJ Viloski
Christy Maurer	Steve Werner
Rebecca McConnell	Cheryl Whalen
Sara Miscannon	Sue Yocum
Anuja Mukherjee	

Legislative Action

Kyle Brun	Vince Range
Paul Comer	Beth Rosica
Laura Detre	Jim Scanlon (facilitator)
Priyanka Gupta	Kristina Skowronek
Cynthia Laudato	Jessica Webb
Jamie OMalley	Jon White

Funding

Kerry Egan	Dana Kelly
Beth Hayes	John Scully (facilitator)
Colin Kelly	