

South Orange Maplewood School District
School Climate, Safety and Security
June 2016 Update

A safe and secure school encompasses many elements, such as building design, a well-trained and well-informed staff, a cooperative relationship with law enforcement, and a nurturing environment.

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1 on school safety and security plans requires that each school district maintains a school safety and security plan that meets the minimum state requirements including:

- a. Each school district shall develop and implement comprehensive plans, procedures and mechanisms that provide for safety and security in the public elementary and secondary school of the school district.
- b. The Chief School Administrator (Superintendent) shall consult with law enforcement agencies, health and social services provider agencies, emergency management plan partners, and school and other community resources, as appropriate, in the development of the school district's plans, procedures, and mechanisms for school safety and security. The plans, procedures, and mechanisms shall be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.
- c. The District shall disseminate to its employees a copy of the school safety and security plan.
- d. The District shall develop and provide an in-service training program for all District employees to enable them to recognize and appropriately respond to safety and security concerns, including emergencies and crises, consistent with the District's plans, procedures, and mechanisms for school safety and security.

There are many things to consider when developing a district-wide school safety and security plan. Although a district-wide emergency management plan exists in the South Orange Maplewood School District, school safety and security planning is an ongoing process. Continuous review of the plan is built into the existing program and amendments are made as warranted.

In light of the ongoing planning, the Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee of the Board of Education, included the following charge in its work-plan:

To develop the scope and metrics for a Climate, Safety & Security Plan for the 2016-17 school year, including but not limited to hiring a School Resource Officer (SRO). Also identify input data for planning purposes, including student and community forums and information from districts with successful SRO programs. In addition, the committee has defined the scope of the plan to include an assessment of current alignment with School Climate, Physical Security and Training prongs of the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) recommendations and

for ongoing monitoring to ensure that the school district has completed assessments of physical security, threats, capacity and school climate. Assessments, or audits, should be conducted in concert with local law enforcement and emergency responders.

In order to identify input data for planning purposes, a community forum was held in May 2016. Much of the discussion and feedback addressed the potential of hiring a School Resource Officer (SRO). An SRO can provide a critical safety factor and valuable counseling and support service for students by providing a collaborative approach between law enforcement and schools, focused on education, prevention, communication and information sharing. The feedback from the forum suggested a discomfort with an SRO at the present time. Administration still feels that an SRO would be a positive support but acknowledges that this is not the correct time to re-introduce this program to South Orange Maplewood.

Alignment with the NJSBA recommendations has been completed and, given confidential security aspects of the subject matter, will be reviewed in committee. However, the community should be aware that the review did indicate alignment with the recommendations and that the Board monitoring being developed should address ongoing agreement.

SAFETY AND SECURITY PLANS

As indicated above, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1, local school district administrators must develop security plans and procedures in consultation with law enforcement, health and social services agencies, emergency management planners and other community resources. The plans must be consistent with the municipality's Emergency Management Plan, reviewed annually, and distributed to law enforcement and school employees. They must also address staff in-service training. At a minimum, the plans must provide for:

1. The protection of the health, safety, security and welfare of the school population
2. The prevention of, intervention in, response to and recovery from emergency and crisis situations;
3. The establishment and maintenance of a climate of civility; and
4. Support services for staff, students and the families.

The Board of Education should include in its monitoring, confirmation that the above areas are addressed and have been reviewed at a minimum twice during each academic school year.

Further, the Board of Education should confirm the following distribution:

- To all staff members within 60 days of employment.
- All employees must also be briefed in writing about updates and changes to the plan, if warranted.

Formulating/updating safety and security plans:

- Involve a district-wide planning team, including input from staff and representatives of law enforcement
- Conduct a hazard analysis of school buildings and grounds, with the possible assistance of local emergency management personnel. The analysis should not only assess the physical environment and technological infrastructure but also the school climate.
 - eliminate (or mitigate) hazards
 - develop procedures to respond to hazards
- Train students and staff on their responsibilities in a give situation.
 - Conduct drills and tabletop exercises
- Changes/enhancements to security reflected considered on ongoing basis should include, but not limited to:
 - expanded facility security features
 - updated lockdown procedures
 - revised access procedures for visitors and staff
 - revised drill procedures
 - engagement of school resource officers and/or security personnel

During the planning and monitoring of the security plan, involvement should at varying times in the process include representation from central administration, Board of Education members, building administration, instructional staff, maintenance staff, students, local code officials, law enforcement, fire department, and other emergency responders, professional consultants, such as architects, engineer, and information technology specialists, and members of the community.

The school safety and security plans should include procedures for quickly communicating to faculty members that a crisis situation exists, and procedures for minimizing the risk of physical harm to students and faculty by reducing their exposure to all hazards.

It is appropriate to develop and rehearse plans and procedures for “locking down” classrooms and buildings to restrict the movement of children and staff and to minimize their exposure to hazardous situations.

CLIMATE

School security should not just be reactive but also proactive in preventing unsafe conditions. School security should not be limited to surveillance and safety officers. School security needs to be considered in terms of how schools build community and supportive relationships. Improving school security includes efforts to develop authoritative school climates.

Cultures and climates of safety support environments in which teachers and administrators pay attention to students' social and emotional needs, as well as their academic needs. In addition to their positive impact on school climate, trusting relationships encourage students to provide school officials with information on potential threats.

A safe school environment offers positive personal role models among its faculty. It provides a place for open discussion, where diversity and differences are respected, communication between adults and students is encouraged and supported and conflict is constructively managed and mediated.

The Board of Education should monitor that a systematic assessment of staff and student perceptions of school climate, including school safety/bullying and student engagement/participation/voice takes place at least once every two years. The feedback should be used in a staff-wide data review aimed at improvement of social-emotional character development competencies and climate.

To enable students to learn in supportive environments at each grade level, the Board of Education should adopt policies that recognize the importance of social-emotional learning, character development, restorative practices and community building.

To build a respectful school climate that enables the advancement of student achievement, local boards of education and school administrators should ensure that the principles of social-emotional learning and character development skill-building are infused into academic instruction in a coordinated manner and that there is a consistent application of discipline.

Local boards of education should ensure that the school safety teams, required by the anti-bullying bill of rights, are not only reviewing reports of harassment, intimidation and bullying, but are also focusing on practices and processes related to school climate, so as to inform the school boards in their periodic review of HIB and related policies.

POLICY AND MONITORING

District security policies and regulations should address administrators' responsibilities, building and site access (including after hours use of facilities) and distribution of keys and access cards. The District should ensure ongoing, periodic review of the school security plan, the memorandum of agreement, administrative response procedures, and protocols governing security drills.

Board of Education members should familiarize themselves with the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement between the local school district and the local law enforcement.

The Board of Education should ensure that the school district has completed assessments of physical security, threats, capacity and school climate. The assessments, or audits, should be

conducted in concert with local law enforcement and emergency responders and should draw on the work of experts in the areas of school climate, security and building design.

The Board of Education should review policies related to school security, including those that address violence and vandalism, student conduct, emergency/disaster preparedness, and weapons/firearms, to ensure that policies are compliant with current statute and regulation and reflect district-specific factors and concerns.

The Board of Education should ensure that practices and procedures are in place to address building access, emergency evacuation, security personnel and emergency medical services for events and functions that take place after the instructional day.

DRILL REQUIREMENTS:

Pursuant to statutory requirements emergency drills, both a fire drill and a security drill, take place at each school every month. A security drill should take place within the first 15 days of the beginning of the school year. Security drills include non-fire evacuations and lockdown situations. We practice a different security drill each month, repeating them as necessary, to ensure that each security drill is practiced at least twice a year and that students and staff know what to do to protect themselves in various situations. After each safety drill, student and staff reactions are monitored and procedures are evaluated to amend safety practices, if warranted. The District should stage these state-required security drills at varying times and days of the week and under different weather conditions. The District should also make use of tabletop exercises as part of the security protocol, especially when full-scale exercises and testing of crisis response is not feasible. Documentation of annual compliance with the mandated drills should be filed with the Department of Education for each school building in the District.

SECURITY TRAINING

The District should provide ongoing training. No-cost training resources are available at the local, county, state and federal levels and should be utilized when possible. Trainings should vary in scope and should address specific threats that the District might face, along with general school security and safety principles. The training on security plans and response procedures should involve any individual in charge of students at a given time, including full-time staff, part-time staff, substitute teachers, contracted staff such as paraprofessionals and lunch monitors, and volunteers. The District should ensure that all individuals in charge of students received information on their role in emergencies. Trainings should also include all District and building staff on their roles in emergencies including, but not limited to, custodial staff and District level employees that may be contacted in an emergency.

Security trainings should involve appropriate outside response entities, including personnel who would respond to the school in an emergency, when appropriate. Outside response entities should be encouraged to visit schools and familiarize themselves with the facilities and their

layouts as part of the training exercises. The School District should ensure that all security personnel (a) receive training appropriate for employment in the school environment, and (b) have in-depth understanding of emergency protocols.

The Board of Education should ensure that the in-service training program for all District employees shall be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate. The Board should also confirm that all employees receive in-service training within 60 days of the effective date of their employment.

COMMUNICATION:

School Administrators should establish a clear chain of command in order to initiate proper notifications to their school crisis response team and emergency responders. An Incident Command System (ICS) should be identified for each building in the District that identifies immediate action, functional protocols and guidelines for responding to all types of hazards.

To ensure communication with all members of the school community, law enforcement and emergency responders, the District should implement multi-platform emergency notification systems that use telephone, email, text messaging, website and other methods of communication. Protocols should be in place for communication with students, families, and the broader community for both during and after an emergency.

Regular testing of the District's communication systems should be in place to confirm integration into the local disaster and response law enforcement communication networks and to monitor status of the equipment and programs.

As part of the security plans, the Board of Education should ensure that staff, students, parents and members of the community are informed of changes in school security procedures in a timely manner. The Board of Education should also convey, or ensure the conveyance, of the importance of reporting to school or law enforcement authorities, unusual incidents or behavior in or around school facilities.

Because of the proven effectiveness of anonymous tip lines in preventing incidents of violence and promoting the health and safety of students, the School District should explore the use of such networks, such as the WeTip program available through the District insurance program.

SECURITY AUDITS/ASSESSMENTS:

Periodic audits/assessments of security and safety measures should be done by the school district. Around the 2014-15 school year, assessments were done including review by safety specialists, security equipment representatives and more recently, a high-level review of our operations received positive feedback from the Department of Homeland Security. Ongoing assessments are done in conjunction with local law enforcement and review of safety and security measures with the District architects of record take place regularly. It is suggested that a

regular schedule for audits be established and that a list of contacts is maintained for ongoing security reviews. Factors to be considered in a security assessment include access to buildings, interior design, the surrounding neighborhood, the need for surveillance, and identification of procedures and technology needed to secure the school.

The Board of Education should ensure through the Finance, Facility and Technology Committee monitoring that:

- Updates to the state-required LRFP are used as an opportunity to ensure security needs are met in an effective, consistent and financially prudent manner
- Through the security planning team process, schools should (a) regularly review the effectiveness of protocols governing visitor entry, key distribution, and student, staff, vendor and visitor access to school buildings and (b) identify improvements to these processes.
- Routine evaluations and review of the condition of buildings includes identification of security maintenance issues in need of attention such as repair of doors and windows, alarm systems, public address systems, utility room access, etc.

The Board of Education should also ensure the effectiveness of revised school security procedures, new equipment or building improvements/alterations through confirmation that a careful review of threat and risk assessment has occurred, and that decisions are made with consideration of community desires and norms, and local budget constraints.