

Board of Education

Parsippany-Troy Hills Township Schools

Board of Education Meeting - February 22, 2018

Administration and Board Responses to Questions Posed by Community Members

The Board understands that our school community is concerned with the safety of our schools. There were many good questions asked at the recent Board of Education meeting and this document provides answers to the general categories of questions asked. Please bear in mind that board members, administration and staff members should not discuss specific security measures that are currently in place or that may be put in place. That discussion in and of itself compromises the security of the schools by alerting those who may want to do harm of those exact measures meant to protect our students.

SECURITY AUDIT

A security audit was commissioned in 2014 and results were presented to the Board of Education in January 2015. The report has been shared with the Director of Security and the Superintendent. Since 2015, numerous upgrades have been implemented in the district, including the addition of security cameras, School Resource Officers, window and door replacement, and a card swipe system for employees.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

School Resource Officers are specially trained police officers from the local jurisdiction that are assigned to a school on a full-time basis. All School Resource Officers in the district are armed. Lieutenant Keith Lefferts is the Director of Security for the Parsippany-Troy Hills School District and has access to live security camera footage.

The School Resource Officers are employed by the Parsippany Police Department and remain informed of local, state, and national security matters through their professional channels. The district has a Memorandum of Agreement that encourages shared dialogue between the police department and the Board of Education. School administrators are informed of suggested and mandated changes to school security through the NJ Department of Education and the Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning.

PHYSICAL PLAN SECURITY

All doors are locked during school hours and there are buzzers at one entrance per school. Visitors to all district facilities are required to buzz in, identify themselves, and sign in at the main office. Cameras are mounted by each entrance for secretaries to monitor before allowing entrance to the school building.

SCHOOL SECURITY DRILLS

NJ Administrative Code requires that all public schools conduct two drills a month. Everyone in the school at the time of the drill participates in the drill and follows the established protocol. School leaders conduct drills for a variety of scenarios so that staff and students can adjust and respond accordingly. Drills are observed by the School Resource Officer and debriefing sessions are held at the school level where modifications to drilling procedures and the hardening of school perimeters are reviewed. Our

Director of Security meets with our district leadership team regularly to share information, suggest modifications, and respond to critical concerns.

Substitute teachers are provided with special information regarding school security when they sign in at the main office.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

We are fortunate in this district to have school counselors present at every elementary, middle, and high school. Additionally, a Student Assistance Counselor is present at each middle and high school and Child Study Teams, comprised of school psychologists, social workers, and behaviorists, are available to address student concerns at all schools. Parsippany High School houses an ESS program which provides an alternate academic setting within the school facility for students to complete their studies with assistance from counselors and trained professionals. Our schools all have School Safety Committees with membership comprised of teachers, administrators, and parents to address school climate and culture, incidents of HIB, and professional training.

There are a number of community resources available to students and families at risk, and our school leaders and counselors partner with these agencies as needed. Professional training is also offered for our staff on promoting an environment of social-emotional awareness and good mental health.

Social media and school email are monitored, but the most direct information comes from students and families. Parents and students with concerns should speak directly with a school principal, guidance counselor, or the police department. Whether it be a threatening email or posting, or worry about a student in trouble, it is critical that detailed and clear information is conveyed to the proper authorities so that an investigation may begin and help may be provided.

FUNDING

The district has been funding security upgrades consistently through our budget and will continue to do so based on the needs of the district, as well as the recommendations of our Director of Security. Two School Resource Officers have been added to the district for shared patrols in our elementary schools. Funding has also been designated to continue to upgrade school facilities and security cameras to maintain a safe and secure environment.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

The Board of Education is grateful for the thoughtful suggestions presented by parents and community members and we will take all ideas into consideration. Security protocols are monitored and adjusted frequently as new practices and information are shared among law enforcement and school leaders.