Quakertown Community School District

Report from the
Community Safety Committee

Pa. School Safety Task Force report emphasizes need for mental health resources in schools

JAMIE MARTINES | Monday, Aug. 27, 2018, 4:03 p.m.

EDUCATION WEEK
Do Schools' 'Active-Shooter' Drills Prepare or Frighten?
By Evie Blad
September 19, 2017

POLITICS   The New York Times
Secret Service Issues Guide to Help Prevent School Shootings
By Alexandra Yoon-Hendricks
July 12, 2018

Pew Research Center
Social & Demographic Trends
MENU   RESEARCH AREAS   SEARCH
FEBRUARY 20, 2019
Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem Among Their Peers

The Washington Post
On Parenting • Perspective
How can we prepare our kids with special needs for a school crisis?

School-Safety Panel Hears Sharply Divergent Messages

EDUCATION
The School Shootings That Weren't

Schools Turning to Anonymous Tip Lines to Thwart Violence

MONDAY JANUARY 7, 2019 09:19 AM
Superintendents' forum: Positive relationships enhance school safety
Boyertown schools chief discusses efforts to improve climate among students, staff and parents.
WRITTEN BY DR. DANA T. BEDDEN

EDUCATION WEEK
Schools Are Spending Millions on Safety. How Will They Know It's Working?
By Evie Blad
November 13, 2018

Committee Purpose

Our purpose is to improve school safety and to increase student, staff, and parent confidence in the safety of our schools by examining best practices in school safety, reviewing current practices in QCSD, identifying opportunities for improvement, and recommending future actions to the Board of School Directors that will contribute to the prevention of school violence.

*All committee meetings were open to the public, held at the DSC Community Room.
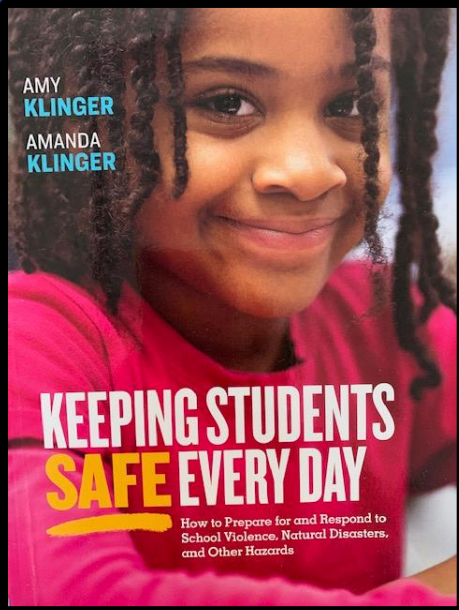
Committee Norms

- *We will start on time and end on time to be respectful of the committee members' time.*

- *We will plan each meeting to have an agenda and clear objectives to maximize the effectiveness of our time together.*

- *We will maintain confidentiality for discussions and documents that could compromise student safety if shared.*

- *We will engage in respectful dialogue, recognizing that reasonable people may disagree on substantive issues.*

- *We will make recommendations based on facts, not fear.*

- *We will make recommendations based on research and best practices, not opinion.*

➢ *The committee met 10 times from September 2018 through March 2019, 6:30-8:30PM at the District Services Center. Committee representatives also met with principals & guidance counselors to review the draft report and get input on recommendations.*

Resources & Learning

1. Reading: *Keeping Students Safe Everyday*; Klinger

2. Reading: *Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters*, an FBI study

3. Reading of various pertinent news articles, both local and national

4. Review of the 2017 PAYS (PA Youth Survey)

5. Presentations and conversation with QCSD staff (Dr. Finnerty, Dr. Bubser, Officer Lee, Janet Pelone, Nancianne Edwards)

6. Informal meeting with QCHS students

7. Review of QCSD Board policy relating student safety, wellness, discipline, bullying, drugs/weapons, terrorism, SAP, positive behavior support, etc.

AMY **KLINGER**
AMANDA **KLINGER**

KEEPING STUDENTS SAFE EVERY DAY

How to Prepare for and Respond to School Violence, Natural Disasters, and Other Hazards

Office of the Superintendent

Findings & Recommendations

The Committee's recommendations to the Board center around four main areas:

1. **Facilities and Equipment**

2. **Protocols and Staff Action**

3. **Supports for Students**

4. **Community Awareness**

Findings & Recommendations

1. Facilities and Equipment

a. Conduct a risk and vulnerability assessment ASAP; prioritize and implement recommendations.
  i. *Rationale: An updated assessment may identify gaps and areas for improvement that have not already been identified through our internal, ongoing risk assessments.*

b. Improve security during arrival/departure times, particularly at the High School and Strayer MS. Consider K12 swipe system to account for students in more efficient way.
  i. *Digital systems will likely improve accuracy of student's attendance and arrival/departure times while decreasing demands on staff.*

c. Review and improve dismissal procedures at elementary buildings

Findings & Recommendations

1.   **Facilities and Equipment**

   d.   Improve safety in the High School parking lot:
       i.   *Increase lighting intensity*
       ii.   *Improve traffic pattern behind the building.*

   e.   Develop action plans/procedures to improve event security at each building, such as gate and/or entrance protocols.

   f.   Ensure ALICE and related safety training is provided to food service and custodial staff

Findings & Recommendations

1. Facilities and Equipment

g.   Purchase additional equipment for SROs

h.   Purchase "Stop the Bleed" kits for each classroom

i.   Revise protocols to expedite the provision of water and necessary supplies to an evacuation point.

j.   Consider visual emergency alerts to supplement auditory alerts

Questions about
Facilities and Equipment
Recommendations?

Findings & Recommendations

2. Protocols and Staff Action

a. Volunteer Policy 916 Administrative Regulation (AR) was amended to state that clearances for volunteers will mirror the clearances for employees; parent groups unanimously agreed to maintain this requirement and this committee supports that protocol.

    i. *Rationale: This will allow for consistency when screening volunteers and ensures that parents feel their children are safe while being in the care of volunteers; while not unduly discriminating against parents/guardian volunteers with a past record. (volunteer vs visitor)*

b. Develop specific additional strategies to address vaping in school.

    i. *Rationale: Vaping is a significant threat to the physical and mental health of our students, and students report that the current strategies are not working.*

Findings & Recommendations

2. Protocols and Staff Action

c. Incorporate instruction for students into the 5th grade health curriculum on the hazards of vaping

d. *Utilize a "secret shopper" to test the execution of the security protocols in each building*
   i. *Rationale: Written procedures are not useful if no one follows them. Front office personnel should be following the procedures for every adult every time, with appropriate consequences when protocols are not followed*

Findings & Recommendations

2. Protocols and Staff Action

e. Increase drill options to include a wider variety of potential scenarios, and include table top drills with older students to develop adaptive decision-making capabilities.
   i. *Rationale: Expanding the types of scenarios will increase overall preparedness and therefore safety*

f. Do not hold school during Election Days (three school buildings affected)

Findings & Recommendations

2. Protocols and Staff Action

g. Middle School Phones - should MS students be allowed to have their phones during the school day, turned off but carried or placed in holder?

h. Develop strategies to increase the empowerment of all staff to challenge visitors.
   i. *Develop messaging campaign with annual staff training and signage*
   ii. *Provide scripts for secretaries to follow with visitors*
   iii. *Communicate and ensure everyone knows these are "hard" rules*

i. Develop communication tools for parents for parent/student reunification after an incident.
   i. *Provide training to parents to know what to do in a critical incident*
   ii. *Utilize YouTube videos to remind everyone what to do and NOT do in an emergency.*

Office of the Superintendent

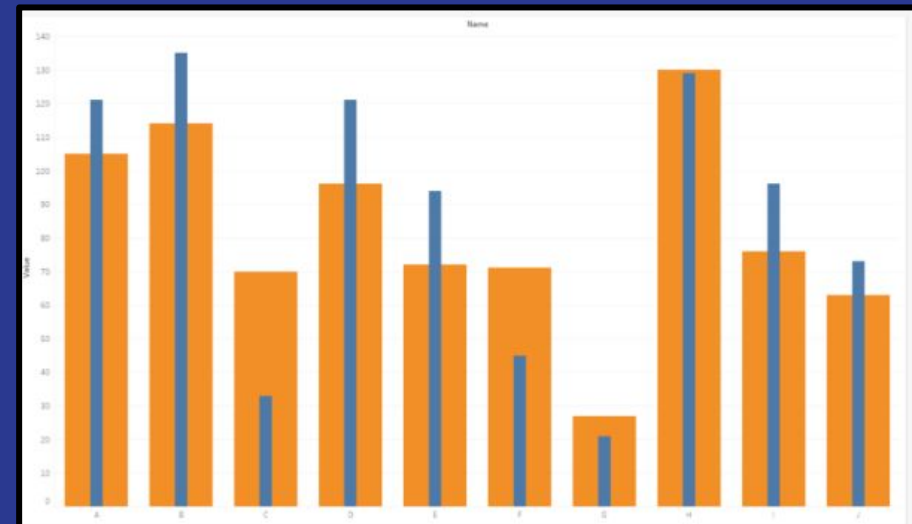# Findings & Recommendations

2. Protocols and Staff Action

j.   Enlist the BCIU in having temporary shelters and necessary medical equipment available for immediate deployment for evacuation of medically fragile students

k.   Train staff in more areas relating to student safety:
   i.   Threat assessment process and what to look for; warning signs/triggers
   ii. Be more proactive in offering voluntary first aid/CPR training to more staff
      a)   *Rationale: Expanding the types of training will increase overall preparedness and therefore safety*

l.   Incorporate Safe2Say training into annual student/parent orientations

Findings & Recommendations

2. Protocols and Staff Action

m. Collect more data on guidance interventions, number of bullying incidents, etc. - analyze data; consider a monthly report on the number of incidents (like the SRO report format) in our school buildings

n. Develop and implement a regular system of testing all communication systems we would rely on in an emergency

Questions about
Protocols and Staff Action
Recommendations?

Findings & Recommendations

3. Supports for Students

a. Create a student safety advisory committee at each secondary building to identify student safety concerns and increase student ownership of maintaining a safe school. Find age-appropriate way to include 5th graders incorporating training with the Peace Center, peer to peer safety education, perhaps utilizing safeties.

    i. *Rationale: Students have valuable insights into the safety of their school, and providing a structured way to hear concerns, develop solutions, and have student champions for safety awareness will contribute to a positive school culture and safer school environment.*

b. Increase number of SAP counselors/social workers to provide additional crisis counseling/mental health counseling for students without negatively impacting vital guidance services.

Findings & Recommendations

3. Supports for Students

c. Explore options of utilizing other staff as student supports:

    i. Provide training for support staff

    ii. Providing training for aides, specifically around handling behaviors/disruptive students; consider varied pay levels for training/skills

    iii. Consider additional special education teacher supports for PSSA testing responsibilities; 504/IEP paperwork, etc.

d. Include automatic HELP Team/follow-up support the day after an incident in a building (combine with e.)

Findings & Recommendations

3. Supports for Students

e. Create AAR (after action review) process for students to debrief after a drill or incident

f. Increase student and parent awareness of appropriate use of social media and internet safety

    i. Utilize parent engagement strategies such as taking the information to where large groups of parents gather (booster clubs, sports team sponsor mtgs, back to school nights, parent "coffees" or breakfasts, etc.); provide information in a series of small chunks; offer "rewards" for parents attending workshops; enlist the help of community organizations

Findings & Recommendations

3. Supports for Students

g. Train students in threat assessment - what to look for in terms of warning signs/triggers.

h. Consider developing a space in the elementary and/or middle schools similar to the Academy at Quakertown, which provides:
   i. quiet spaces
   ii. allows staff to support students who are flying under the radar but need help

i. Add SEL and coping skills as an elementary special

Questions about Supports for Students Recommendations?

Findings & Recommendations

4. Community Awareness

a. Provide a robust menu of parent education opportunities each year on topics related to school safety, including threat assessment and what to look for (warning signs/triggers), drug trends, vaping, bullying, stress management, Raptor System. Workshops should be available in multiple formats - building/district level events, videos, QCSD website.

Bring the information to where the parents gather! (see 3. f.)

  i. *Rationale: Safety is everyone's responsibility. All stakeholders need an awareness of what kinds of behavior and statements are of concern and know what steps to take when a concern is identified*

Findings & Recommendations

4. Community Awareness

b. Create an awareness campaign to increase student, parent and staff awareness of available student supports and services. Add signage/ messaging and a Student Resource Guide to the Communications strategy.

    i. Rationale: There are many supports services available to QCSD students - SAP, mental health counselors, etc. - but many students and adults do not know about them or how to access them.

c. Maintain an ad hoc Parent Safety Committee to provide annual feedback on safety protocols, AARs after significant events. etc.

d. Connect parents to community resources for activities such as Pride of Quakertown or free flag football.

Questions about
Community Awareness
Recommendations?

Closing & Next Steps

Safety is EVERYONE'S job…

we will never be "done".

Closing & Next Steps

- Incorporate recommendations into Board/Superintendent goals for 2019-20

- Take immediate action on Risk and Vulnerability Assessment