

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY
INFORMATIONAL REPORT
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
SAFETY AND SECURITY
OCTOBER 23, 2017

Background Information:

Each year, the Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) recommends to the Harford County Board of Education the areas of study to be pursued by each of the Citizen Advisory Committees appointed by the Board of Education. A charge or area of study is provided to each Board sponsored Citizen Advisory Committee to be completed during the following calendar year. The Citizen Advisory Committee reports their findings in October of each year.

The areas of study for the 2016-2017 school year assigned to the Citizen Advisory Committee on Safety and Security were as follows: 1) Conduct a comprehensive review of critical incident plans for a minimum of nine schools, including three elementary, three middle, and three high; and 2) Research other school districts' critical incident response options for school staff, teachers, and students.

Discussion:

The Citizen Advisory Committee on Safety and Security (herein referred to as "the Committee") notes the following accomplishments, recommendations, and proposed charge for the 2017-18 school year:

Accomplishments

1. *Reviewed individual school critical incident plans and conducted on-site assessments.*

The HCPS Safety and Security Department, local law enforcement officials, and individual school leadership teams worked together to coordinate on-site safety assessment visits by Committee members. During these on-site visits, Committee members reviewed the access protocols and physical security procedures that the school had outlined in its critical incident plan. The purpose of each visit was to determine if schools were adhering to their established procedures.

The Committee's assessments are not intended to be:

- A grading or rating of the efforts of an individual school's leadership.
- A means to score a school and compare it against others.
- A substitute for other inspection authorities or regulatory and inspection surveys that are part of the HCPS safety and security reporting requirements.

Committee personnel perform structured activities for each assessment. These tasks are divided into three phases: (1) activities completed prior to arrival at the school; (2) assessment activities performed during the school visit; and, (3) follow-up actions taken after the school visit.

Specific tasks include the following:

The Committee team coordinates the date, time, and location of each on-site assessment visit with the HCPS Safety and Security Department, who then notifies local law enforcement and the respective school of these details. The Committee team reviews the individual school's critical incident plan, noting any areas of concern. During the visit, the Committee team works under the assumption that the school is operating in its normal day-to-day mode. Prior to departing the school, the Committee team provides a report of their review to the school Principal, if necessary. All reports are also submitted to the HCPS Safety and Security Department for any needed follow-up actions.

Nine schools were assessed on-site during the 2016-2017 school year. No major concerns were identified at any of the schools. All minor concerns were addressed with school administration. Overall, schools were celebrated for maintaining strong access control at main entrances and the consistent use of visibly displayed employee identification badges.

The Committee reviewed eleven individual critical incident plans. All plans were found to be in compliance with HCPS safety and security procedures. Recommendations were made as needed.

2. *Research other school districts' critical incident response options for school staff, teachers, and students.*

Due to Committee turnover, this area of study has not yet been addressed.

Recommendations

1. The Committee found that all schools have developed critical incident plans that are site specific for their physical location. The Committee recommends conducting a comprehensive review of a minimum of twelve schools annually.
2. The Committee recommends that Administrations periodically check that unoccupied classroom doors are locked. In addition, Administrators should check that doors are not propped open and that restricted areas are secured at all times.

Proposed Charge for 2017-2018 School Year

The Committee requests to pursue the following areas of study during the 2017-2018 school year:

1. Conduct a comprehensive review of all critical incident plans for Harford County Public Schools.
2. Conduct safety/security site assessments for a minimum of twelve schools to include four elementary, four middle, and four high.

The Committee would like to thank the Harford County Board of Education for allowing the Committee the opportunity to present its views. These views are from professionals, parents, and students in many of our public schools throughout Harford County. We would like to thank Superintendent Mrs. Barbara Canavan, Mr. Robert Benedetto, Cpl. Brian O'Neil, and all of the current Committee members. We look forward to serving the Board of Education and the citizens of our county by providing the citizen's perspective and offering advice related to the safety and security in Harford County Public Schools.