

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY
INFORMATIONAL REPORT
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
SAFETY AND SECURITY
OCTOBER 24, 2016

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 Citizens Advisory Committees appointed by the Board of Education. A charge or area of study is provided to each Board sponsored Citizens Advisory Committee to be completed during the following calendar year. The Citizens Advisory Committee reports their findings in October of each year.

The area of study for the 2015-2016 school year assigned to the Safety and Security Committee were as follows: 1) Continue to review individual school critical incident plans and to conduct on-site assessments; and 2) Study the feasibility of the implementation of early notification to parents/guardians of student absence.

Discussion:

Over the past school year, the Citizen Advisory Committee on Safety and Security (herein referred to as “the Committee”) notes the following accomplishments, recommendations, and proposed charge for the 2016-17 school year.

Accomplishments

1. *Review individual school critical incident plans and conduct on-site assessments.*

With close coordination with school leadership, the Office of Safety and Security, and local law enforcement, Committee members working in teams visited schools and conducted an assessment of the access protocols and physical security procedures schools outline in their plans. The intent of the assessment is to validate adherence to the school’s established procedures.

The Committee’s assessments are not intended to be:

- An inspection or effort to grade or rate the efforts of an individual school’s leadership.
- An evaluation or report that scores a school and compares it against schools.
- A substitute for other inspection authorities, regulatory, or inspection surveys part of the HCPS safety and security reporting requirements.

Committee personnel perform the following activities in preparing for an assessment. The tasks are divided into three phases: (1) activities necessary prior to arrival at the school; (2) the assessment activities at the school; and, (3) the follow-on actions after the school visit. The team coordinates the date, time, and location with the Office of Safety and Security, who then notifies local law enforcement and the respective school. Then the team reviews

the individual school's incident plan for areas of concern. To perform the assessment in a reasonable period, the team assumes it is viewing the school in its day-to-day operating mode and makes its recommendations accordingly. Prior to departure, the team provides a review for the school principal, if needed. All reports are submitted to the Office of Safety and Security for follow up.

Six schools were assessed during the 2015-2016 school year. The following are some of the findings:

- Cafeteria doors being propped open (cool air, deliveries, convenience, etc.);
- Exterior doors failing to latch;
- Main entrance access control was very good across schools assessed and included visitor management system (badges);
- Employees consistently wore badges as required (visible); and
- Unoccupied classrooms/portables were left unsecured.

*Any identified problems were corrected at the school level.

2. Implementation of early notification to parents/guardians of student absence.

The Committee was initially charged with studying the feasibility of the implementation of early notification to parents/guardians of student absence. The Committee began to research how absenteeism is conveyed to parents/guardians and if any recommendations could be given for the possibility of implementing an earlier notification as opposed to an evening call.

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Superintendent established a leadership subcommittee to determine a time when a Blackboard Connect 5 notification would produce the best results to inform parents/guardians of student truancy. As a result of their findings, notifications are now sent at 5:15pm.

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 nine schools.
2. The Committee defers to the decision made by the Superintendent Leadership subcommittee to notify parents of student absence at 5:15pm.

Proposed Charge for 2016-2017 School Year

The Committee requests to pursue the following areas of study during the 2016-2017 school year:

1. Conduct a comprehensive review of critical incident plans for a minimum of nine schools to include three elementary, three middle, and three high. This review will assess if the plans meet the needs of that specific school.
2. Research other school district's critical incident response options for school staff, teachers, and students.

The Committee would like to thank the Harford County Board of Education for allowing the Committee the opportunity to present our 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 advice related to the safety and security in Harford County Public Schools.