

Appendix A: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its research, the New Jersey School Boards Association School Security Task Force makes a total of 45 recommendations in the following areas: Security Personnel; School Climate; Policy and Planning; Communications; Training in School Security; Physical Security, and Financing.

I. SECURITY PERSONNEL

Local School District/Community

1. Because of significant variations in the size of school districts and local law enforcement agencies, building lay-outs, student populations and community attitudes, the decision on whether or not to employ security personnel—armed or un-armed, police or non-police—must rest exclusively with the local school district and should not be dictated by the state.
2. A School Resource Officer (SRO) can provide a critical safety factor and valuable counseling and support services for students. The employment of SROs is the “preferred” model for a law enforcement presence in a school building.
3. In assigning SROs or other law enforcement officers to schools, local law enforcement agencies must consider fully the qualifications and aptitude of the individual, including his or her capability as a first responder and ability to relate to students. Additionally, the training of SROs must stress conflict resolution, restorative justice and stationhouse adjustment practices, as well as awareness of gang and drug abuse activities.
4. School districts should ensure that all security personnel (a) receive training appropriate for employment in the school environment and (b) have in-depth understanding of local emergency protocols.
5. In developing the Memorandum of Agreement, school districts/charter schools and local law enforcement should clearly address the intersection of school policy/disciplinary code, Criminal Code and the Juvenile Justice Code. They must ensure that student behavior that is in violation of school codes of conduct be addressed by school officials and not be imposed on police. Based on federal and state law and school policy, such guidance should ensure the following: immediate response to crises; protection of the safety and interests of students affected by violent acts; the appropriate avenues of discipline and referral for student offenders; and the recognition of state requirements in areas such as student possession of firearms and weapons on school grounds, and harassment, intimidation and bullying.

State and Federal

6. The state and federal governments, respectively, should provide and increase grant funding to support the assignment of law enforcement officers as School Resource Officers.

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7. The Legislature and the Governor should enact legislation to establish a new category of law enforcement officers, such as Special Law Enforcement Officer Level III, who are specially trained in working with students and assigned to protect our schools. Such law enforcement personnel can provide an additional school security option to school districts. The legislation should also relieve current limits on working hours for special officers when they are assigned to schools and should ease the restrictions on the number of such officers employed by a municipality.
8. The New Jersey Department of Education and the Office of the Attorney General should revise *The New Jersey Guide to Establishing a Safe Schools Resource Officer Program in Your Community*, which was published in 1998, so that the document reflects recent developments in the areas of security, funding and programming.

II. SCHOOL CLIMATE

Local School District/Community

9. Local school districts should engage in school climate assessments and develop and implement plans to ensure that students have safe, secure and supportive learning environments that provide meaningful communication and involvement with caring adults on the school staff. (A list of climate assessment resources is found on page 30 of this report.)
10. Not all student groups experience school safety and the school climate in the same manner. To enable students to learn in supportive environments at each grade level, local school boards should adopt policies that recognize the importance of social-emotional learning, character development, restorative practices and community building. In addition, the Task Force recommends that school boards review the information on social-emotional learning, supportive practices, and authoritative disciplinary structures in Section II of this report, School Climate.
11. 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.
12. 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.

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13. To ensure their School Safety Teams have a positive impact on school climate, local boards of education should consider requiring the teams to meet more than the twice-yearly minimum.

State

14. As recommended by the NJ SAFE task force, the state should form an “interagency working group” comprised of various departments, including education, law and public safety, and health and human services, to address policy and programs on early intervention and mental health services at the community level. A similar state-level approach (the Education-Law Enforcement Working Group) has had a positive impact on local policy and procedures through the state’s Uniform Memorandum of Agreement.
15. To clarify the role of the School Safety Teams in improving school climate, the New Jersey State Board of Education should amend administrative code (*N.J.A.C. 6A:16*) to rename these bodies “School Safety/Climate Teams,” as recommended by the state’s Anti-Bullying Task Force.

III. POLICY AND PLANNING

Local School District/Community

16. The local 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, should follow guidelines published in the *New Jersey School Safety & Security Manual: Best Practices Guidelines* (2006) and should draw on the work of experts in the areas of school climate, security, and building design.
17. Local 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 agency.
18. Local school districts should form committees representing all stakeholders (staff, parents, administrators, emergency responders, law enforcement, community members, etc.) as part of their efforts to develop school security plans, to assess the plans on an ongoing basis, and to identify necessary enhancement of school security protocols, equipment, and staffing.
19. Local school districts should ensure ongoing, periodic review of the school security plan, the Memorandum of Agreement, administrative response procedures, and protocols governing security drills.

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20. School 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.
21. School districts should stage state-required security drills at varying times and days of the week and under different weather conditions. Drills should involve numerous crisis scenarios, so that school officials and law enforcement can evaluate their effectiveness, make necessary adjustments in procedures, identify safety weaknesses and make recommendations for additional training.
22. School districts should make tabletop exercises a regular part of the security protocol, especially when full-scale exercises and testing of crisis response is not feasible. Tabletop exercises should involve law enforcement, fire departments, and emergency response agencies.
23. Local boards of education should review their policies related to school security, including those that address violence and vandalism, student conduct, emergencies/disaster preparedness, and weapons/firearms, to ensure that they are compliant with current statute and regulation and reflect district-specific factors and concerns.
24. School boards 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.

State

25. The New Jersey Department of Education should ensure that the manual, *School Safety and Security Manual: Best Practice Guidelines*, last published in 2006 is updated as needed to incorporate the most recent developments in school security strategies and procedures, emergency equipment and technology.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS

Local School District/Community

26. As part of their school security plans, local boards of education should (a) ensure that staff, students, parents and members of the community are informed of changes in school security procedures in a timely manner and (b) convey the importance of reporting to school or law enforcement authorities unusual incidents or behavior in or around school facilities.

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27. To ensure communication with all members of the school community, law enforcement and emergency responders, school districts should implement multi-platform emergency notification systems that use telephone, email, text messaging, website and other methods of communication.
28. Because of the proven effectiveness of anonymous tip lines in preventing incidents of violence and promoting the health and safety of students, school districts should explore the use of such networks and take advantage of the systems that are currently available.

State

29. The NJ SAFE Task Force recommendation to establish a statewide anonymous tip line should be pursued by the state Departments of Education, Community Affairs, and Law and Public Safety, as well as the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and other agencies.

V. SECURITY TRAINING

Local School District/Community

30. To ensure that all school staff members have the appropriate knowledge to improve security and help prevent and respond to emergencies, local school districts should (a) provide on-going training, and (b) utilize the varying no-cost training resources available to them at the local, county, state and federal levels.
31. Training provided to district staff should vary in scope and should address specific threats that a district might face, along with general school security and safety principles.
32. 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, and volunteers. Districts should ensure that all individuals in charge of students receive information on their role in emergencies.
33. When conducting training, school districts should involve appropriate outside response entities, including personnel who would respond to the schools in an emergency. Districts should also encourage representatives of outside entities to visit schools and familiarize themselves with the facilities and their layouts as part of training exercises, such as active shooter drills for law enforcement personnel.

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VI. PHYSICAL SECURITY

Local School District/Community

34. Local boards of education and school administrators should use the state-required updates to their district's Long Range Facility Plan as an opportunity to ensure that security needs are met in an effective, consistent and financially prudent manner.
35. Local school boards should ensure that school security planning includes consultation with professionals in the areas of architecture, engineering and information technology, as well as construction and fire code officials.
36. For schools with extensive windows and glass doors, particularly at ground level, districts should implement the most effective and economical method to prevent penetration through the use of firearms.
37. Through the use of security planning teams, school districts 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.
38. To the extent possible, school districts should incorporate the Homeland Security Standards for new construction and the NJDOE "Security Standards for Schools under Construction" into renovations and alterations of existing facilities.
39. School districts should routinely evaluate and review the condition of their buildings and identify maintenance issues (e.g., repair of door locks, doors and windows, alarm systems, public address systems, utility room access, etc.) in need of attention.
40. School districts should ensure the effectiveness of revised school security procedures, new equipment or building improvements/alterations through a careful review of threat/risk assessment and consideration of community desires and norms, and local budget constraints.

VII. FINANCING SCHOOL SECURITY

Local School District/Community

41. Local school districts and municipalities are encouraged to share costs to enable the assignment of School Resource Officers.

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State and Federal Government

42. The Commissioner of Education should amend state regulation (*N.J.A.C. 6A:23A*) to eliminate “Operation and Maintenance of Plant cost per pupil equal to or less than the State median” as a standard for receipt of state aid when reviewing proposed school district budgets or requests to seek voter approval to exceed the tax levy cap.
43. The state should designate additional construction grant funding for the express purpose of enhancing school security.
44. The legislature should provide additional options to enable school districts to hire and retain appropriately trained security personnel.
45. The federal government should restore grant funding to support the assignment of School Resource Officers.