

Dear South Brunswick School Community,

It is getting harder and harder to imagine that when a school shooting occurs, it gets discussed in terms of what number shooting it is (in just this year alone). The horror at Santa Fe High School in Texas is the latest tragedy involving a gunman and the senseless death of students and staff in a school setting. To say that this is too common is an understatement of all understatements.

Saying to ourselves, "That could never happen here," is probably a phrase we can no longer cling to, but rather must be vigilant and smart about how we consider the protection of our faculty and students. I want to share the actions and ongoing efforts we have taken to intensify security in every school building so that we can focus our energy on student learning while at the same time being confident in knowing your children are protected from harm.

The following represent recent and ongoing efforts in the area of safety & security:

- **Working closely with our South Brunswick Police.** It starts here and we meet regularly with Lt. Gene Rickle, who is assigned full time to the schools. He attends our monthly administrative council meetings, provides security updates, and engages the group in various safety scenarios as we continue to learn the latest school security measures from a law enforcement standpoint.
 - We increased our police presence this year and added a fourth officer to our full time patrol.
 - We continue to consult with the police on drills and other daily safety processes.
 - While exploring school safety by way of camera, visitor management, and entrance protocols, we have members of the police force with us each step of the way.
 - Please know that from Chief Hayducka to Deputy Chief Ryan to Lt. Gene Rickle and our SRO team, we have the full weight of the entire SBPD at our disposal while working side by side with us on the best practices in school safety.

- **Reassessment of our entrance protocols** - All safety reviews usually focus a great deal on the access to the buildings. This is an area that has taken up a good deal of our attention.
 - As I have shared, the schools are going to be under significant construction this summer as we create double entry vestibules. This means that before someone could have access to the full run of a building, they will have to go through a staging point and have human contact before entrance. But it does not stop at just a set of double doors.
 - We have also identified a **visitor management software** package that we will utilize for every entrant. This includes sophisticated software that does an instantaneous check on certain criminal backgrounds, custody concerns and other information that can be stored to inform the school of who is seeking

entrance. This product then produces a picture badge for each visitor and has many other features that allow the school to know who is in the building and why they are visiting.

- New **cameras** for every building aligned with the above software will better capture who is trying to enter our building and also where they are in the building.
 - Finally, once we have the above systems fully installed, we will be working with each school's **front office on protocols and expectations** for entry to provide uniformity and a more strict guidance on who can enter and the process that will be used to manage visitors.
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- **Emergency Notification** - We are also looking at a product that will allow for an emergency notification to be sent out to all faculty and law enforcement straight from an app, which produces a much quicker and widespread notification than a traditional 911 phone call.

 - **Security Drills** - We continue to practice security drills at all schools during the school day and also in all of the before and after school programs. This practice continues throughout the summer months when students are in buildings.

 - **District Cameras** - We have made the commitment to purchase a full camera upgrade IN ALL SCHOOLS. While cameras may not be a deterrent to all things, it does provide our law enforcement direct access and live feeds as well as informs school personnel on things that are happening in key areas of each building. The sophistication and amount of cameras will be differentiated by building level, but all buildings will see a significant upgrade in this area.

 - **District Mapping** - We have teamed up with an organization that will provide full overview grid maps of each school footprint. In more simple terms, each school will be mapped using a standard letter number grid similar to the game *Battleship*. These digital grids will be fully available to first responders and all school officials. Should there be a situation, rather than describing a room location, we will now be able to use a clear and more direct location identifier. For example, "Child has fallen in section F5 room 203." School officials and first responders would call up the grid and their mobile device and now have a clear destination in a very timely manner.

 - **Student Support** - Creating a safer and healthier environment not only relies on hardware and software, but more importantly, in many ways, on the behavior of humans; adults - both in and out of school - and of course our students. Recent shootings have involved current and former students of their respective schools. **Whatever can be done to stop these tragedies long before vestibules, cameras and drills are needed, must be a main focus of every school community.**

- Our district will have a **School Safety Specialist** who will undergo significant training on school safety measures. This person will lead a District safety team inclusive of members from the SBPD.
 - Our **counseling department** will be an integral part of this work in identifying behavioral concerns beginning as early as Kindergarten and strengthening as our students move through their schooling.
 - Efforts in **anti-bullying, conflict resolution, suicide prevention, and Social-Emotional Learning** will continue to be a focus of the district as we know that these are areas that can often directly correlate to future challenges in young adolescents.
 - **Parent outreach** and connectivity is vital and building relationships with our families of troubled youth (as well as all of our families) is paramount in forging a partnership to keeping our school community safe.
 - **Parent education** - identifying when your child may be at risk or exhibiting behaviors that could result in anti social behaviors.
 - Establishing the strongest of **partnerships with community and state resources** in mental health and continuing to learn about the best practices in identifying at risk individuals. We do a great deal with this now, but we must continue to do more and build on our practices.
- **Transportation** - Creating a safe commute for all students to and from school is an expectation the district must meet. Throughout the year the district worked to redesign routes for efficiencies to improve performance. Also, each bus will utilize Zonar, a tracking software, that will allow community members to view busses on their routes in real time, track driver performance, and review drop-off and pick-up times.

Finally, we must advocate for our schools with funding sources from the State and Federal Government to help finance the costs associated with the highest levels of security in our schools. I am not going to use my platform as a school superintendent to politicize the gun violence we have seen in our schools, but rather, I will say that kids and educators are dying at far more than alarming rates right inside of our schools, and more needs to be done and it needs to be done today!

Thank you for all you do to support the security of our schools,

Scott