

OPPAGA

“Safe Passage”

Hamilton County School District

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Goal A: The school district ensures that its security program has clear directions and is effective at meeting its intended purpose in a cost-efficient manner.

- 1.** **Best Practice:** The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the safety program.

Stakeholders from all over Hamilton County are currently involved in strategic planning for the Hamilton County School District. A vision for the district schools, as well as goals, objectives, strategies, and action plans is being developed. This will be an ongoing process for the school board.

The Superintendent of Schools and the Assistant Superintendent meet annually to assess the performance and cost efficiency of the safety program using past performances of safety initiatives and critical safety needs. Potential cost savings of alternatives such as outside contracting and privatization are explored. The district does have contractual agreements with the Hamilton County Health Department for School health nurses, and with the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department to provide School Resource Officers for all the schools in the district.

Appropriate data for the SESIR report is updated regularly through TERMS. The district receives reviews of the safety and security programs from the Hamilton County Health Department, OSHA, Panhandle Area Education Consortium and Staff from the Hamilton County School Board.

Recommendations

We recommend that safety and security continue to be included in the strategic planning process currently taking place in the Hamilton County School District in order to ensure that it has clear direction and meets its intended purpose.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

There will be no additional cost to the district. This will be an ongoing process.

- 2.** **Best Practice .** The district regularly reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the safety and security program and minimizes layers and processes.

At least once a year the Superintendent of Schools and Assistant Superintendent meet to review the program and staffing levels of the safety and security program to minimize administrative layers and processes and to make sure the program is being administered efficiently and effectively.

Goal B. The school district has comprehensive plans and procedures to ensure the safety and security of students and employees.

1. Best Practice: The district has implemented a school safety plan that includes district-wide emergency and safety procedures and identifies those responsible for them.

Each school in the district has written school improvement plans that include school safety goals and procedures. The district has also implemented a comprehensive school safety plan that establishes emergency and safety procedures for employees and students to follow. Interagency agreements and Mutual Aid Agreements are in place with local emergency agencies and officials to ensure immediate assistance from those agencies.

2. Best Practice: The district has developed a checklist for each educational facility that provides step-by-step emergency procedures.

A checklist (Crisis Management Plan) is available in every classroom in the district. The emergency situations included in the plan are: Early closing of school, suicide, drug incidents, chemical spills and railroad incidents, fire, serious injury or illness, sexual battery on campus, severe weather, armed individual, kidnaping, shooting on campus, hostage situations, bomb threats or suspicious objects, and other emergency procedures.

The district has a procedure in place for contacting all schools simultaneously in the event of a district-wide emergency by using E-mail and by phone.

Although the district has a number of trained personnel to assist in the event of an emergency, an emergency crisis team has not been designated.

Recommendations

We recommend that an EMERGENCY CRISIS TEAM be established and be available to schools to provide counseling and other support in dealing with an emergency.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

We recommend that this team be designated as soon as possible during the 2002-2003 school year. The cost should be minimal utilizing personnel already on staff.

3. Best Practice: The district develops and maintains its school safety plan and emergency response procedures with stakeholder input.

A cross-section of stakeholders were involved in the development of the Crisis Management Plan for the district. These plans and procedures have been provided to each school advisory council member, school principal, teacher, member of the support staff, and all other school district employee.

Although the plan is very thorough and takes into account most of the possible emergencies deemed possible at the time of its development, a number of new types of emergencies have arisen (suspicious mail, various new types of terrorism, etc.) that need to be included in the plan.

Recommendations

We recommend that the CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN be updated during the early part of the 2002-2003 school year. This should be an annual and ongoing process.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

This needs to be accomplished during the 2002-2003 school year. The cost is projected to be \$2000.00.

4. Best Practice: The district provides emergency response agencies with floor plans and blueprints as appropriate.

Floor plans of each educational facility in the district have been provided to local law enforcement agencies and fire departments.

The district has blueprints, or drawings, readily available for review during an emergency.

5. Best Practice: The district and each school regularly practice

emergency responses based on potential hazards at each site.

The school district has developed and implemented procedures for emergency drills in accordance with state law. Documentation for the required drills is on file in the office of the Coordinator of General Services and at each school.

The annual self-assessment is used to identify potential hazards for each facility.

6. Best Practice: The district's Master Plan for In-Service Training identifies district and school personnel who need safety training and provides an appropriate level of safety training for all personnel.

The district has developed a very thorough Master Plan for In-Service Training which includes several types of safety training. However, the plan does not identify the minimum safety training required for all staff. It also does not specify required safety training for certain staff members working in safety sensitive areas.

The principals documented that staff have received training based on the in-service needs assessment and the staff members responsibilities. Such training included First Aid, CPR, the district's Blood borne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan, Conflict resolution, etc.

The district has used training opportunities provided by the DOE and other organizations, including our Health Nurses.

Recommendations

We recommend that the district amend the Master Plan for In-Service to include the identification of the minimum safety training required for all staff members, as well as the staff that require specialized training and incorporate these components into the plan.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

This is to be accomplished during the 2002-2003 school year at a minimal cost to the district.

Goal C: The school district has developed a clearly written code of student conduct and communicated with students and parent.

1. Best Practice: The district and each school have established disciplinary policies and a code of student conduct that are well-defined.

The Hamilton County School Board is not in compliance with the relevant laws and regulations regarding discipline policies including the code of student conduct. At the time of registration students are required to disclose their prior history of expulsions, arrests resulting in charges, and juvenile justice actions. The district enforces a zero tolerance policy for crime, substance abuse, and victimization. Policies are in place that deal with relocation of students who are dismissed from classes, anti-harassment policies, anti-violence policies, and locker searches.

Although the policy is specific regarding interviewing students by law enforcement agencies, language regarding interviewing students by the Department of Children and Family Services is omitted.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Department of Children and Family Services be included in the language regarding interviewing students in the Code of Student Conduct and is currently planned by the district staff. We also recommend revising our student registration form to include their prior history of expulsions, arrests resulting in charges, and juvenile justice actions.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

This should be done by August, 2002 at no additional cost to the district.

2. Best Practice: The district revised its code of student conduct and informs all stakeholders as to the final product.

The code of student conduct is reviewed annually and revised by the district school board and school administrators. It is clearly written and does not contain technical terminology. At the beginning of each school year, the code of student conduct, as part of the student handbook, is given to every student enrolled in the district.

Although all stakeholders do have input into the changes and revision of school policy, a concerted effort will be made to actively seek input from teachers, staff, parents and students.

Recommendations

We recommend that the district solicit input from teachers, staff, parents, and students in the revision of the code of student conduct as planned by the district staff.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

There will be no additional cost to the district. This is to be completed in August, 2002.

Goal D: The school district identifies, minimizes, and protects others from disruptive and/or violent student behavior.

1. Best Practice: Each school has a system in place to identify the early warning signs of student violence.

To some extent, the district instructs the staff in the detection of early warning signs of violence, and facilitates and encourages requests for assistance with students who exhibit signs of violence. Plans are currently underway for the district to provide the appropriate staff development and additional information to the appropriate educator during the 2002-2003 school year.

The district does make available appropriate psychological counseling for students who exhibit early warning signs of violence, and has procedures in place to maintain legal confidentiality of information regarding these students.

Recommendations

We recommend that the district proceed with plans to provide staff development and additional information regarding the identification of the early signs of student violence to the appropriate educators.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

There will be no additional cost to the district. These plans should be completed during the 2002-2003 school year.

2. Best Practice: The district identifies and implements parent and community outreach strategies to promote safety in the home and community.

The district has developed a cooperative agreement with the Department of Juvenile Justice dealing with zero tolerance for crime and victimization and works with local law enforcement agencies in addressing other safety and

security issues. The district also works through agencies such as the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department, Teen Court, The Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, Emergency Management and other groups to address safety and security. Information regarding the necessary school-entry health examinations and immunizations for all students is provided via the news media and through memos and newsletters to parents.

3. Best Practice: The district conducts hazards analysis to determine the potential safety and security issues facing each school.

All district schools have a Safety Committee (Risk Control Committee) which meets regularly to identify possible safety and security hazards and make recommendations for corrective action. Principals reported that appropriate programs were also in place at the schools to respond to early warning signs of violence and reduce the number of violence risk factors.

The district continually assesses the applicability of successful school programs such as Alcohol Awareness, Tobacco Free, etc. through the Safe and Dug Free School Programs.

4. Best Practice: Based on the needs identified in the school hazards analysis, the district implements appropriate violence and drug prevention programs for each school.

The district has successfully implemented an approved Safe and Drug Free School plan. This plan is reviewed and updated annually.

The district uses court records and background checks of new employees to track charges and convictions of students and employees.

The district works with agencies such as the Department of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice, the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department, Teen Court, the Circuit Court Judge, and other agencies in developing, implementing, and maintaining its safety programs.

The district has contracted with drug free counselors to provide drug prevention education at specified grade levels. This program is evaluated annually and results are submitted to the district office. Other programs such as "Second Step Prevention" and "Life Skills Training" are also used and evaluated annually. Published results of the review are available in the district office.

5. Best Practice: The district has crime watch and school safety hotlines available in all schools.

The district has a school safety hotline in place and available in all schools. Additional emphasis will be put on making students, parents and others aware of the hotline through memos, website, newsletters to parents, PTO meetings, parent conferences, bulletins, wall posters, etc.

6. Best Practice: The school board adopts curricula and programs aimed at protecting students, teachers, bus operators, administrators, and school personnel.

Programs such as “Second Step Prevention”, Life Skills Training” and “Elgin Longhorn of Night Shade Country” are made available to the schools as sources of violence prevention and safety-related programs. These programs were selected by committees from the Hamilton County School Board, including school representatives, and were approved by the school board.

Goal E: Educational facilities and equipment are safe and in good working condition.

1. Best Practice: The district conducts an annual review of all relevant health and safety issues for each educationally facility.

In accordance with Florida law and regulations, Principals report safety and discipline data to DOE through TERMS (the automated student database).

The required fire safety inspections, SREF reviews, casualty reviews, etc, are conducted annually and are contracted through the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium.

The review results are received in March and work orders are issued immediately for all deficiencies. All corrections are made within a reasonable time period.

2. Best Practice: The district designs educational facilities and sites to enhance security and reduce vandalism through the use of “safe school design” principles.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles are used in the maintenance, renovation, and construction of educational facilities in Hamilton County. An architect is hired only after the District Facilities Director and other district administrators confer with local school administrators on all issues

involving the safety and security of the educational facility. The “Safe school design” principles are then incorporated into the planning and construction of the facility.

The final plans are then submitted to the Department of Education for approval. All renovation and construction plans are approved by the DOE before work begins.

3. Best Practice: The district has procedures that govern access to each educational facility and its students and access is limited to authorized students and visitors.

The entrance to each educational facility in Hamilton County is clearly marked with signs and procedures for visitors to follow upon entering the facility. Each facility also has a policy and procedure for the release of students to parents, etc. Buildings are secured when there are key control systems to account for all keys.

4. Best Practice: The district ensures that playgrounds are properly constructed, maintained, and supervised so as to reduce the risk of injury.

Many of the playgrounds have been in place for a number of years and are showing signs of aging. Although the district has used US Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines in the construction of playgrounds, there are areas of concern that need to be addressed. Playground maintenance and repair is an ongoing endeavor.

Principals reported that playground areas are being supervised when children are present and using the playground areas.

Recommendations

It is recommended that a system be initiated whereby all playgrounds undergo a yearly maintenance check by a certified playground inspector and district personnel, unsafe conditions documented, and corrections completed in a timely manner.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

This should be an ongoing process and be of minimal cost to the district by the utilization of staff currently employed and Panhandle Area Educational Consortium playground inspector.

5. Best Practice: Each educational facility has appropriate equipment to

protect the safety and security of property and records.

A new high school which will be under construction will also have security cameras installed. Some of the other schools have security alarm systems. A few of the schools are partially fenced, providing security to parts of the facilities.

Recommendations

We recommend that hazards analyses be conducted to determine the needs of additional security systems.

Fiscal Impact and Time line

This study needs to be done during the 2002-2003 school year. The study could be accomplished utilizing staff already employed by the Hamilton County School Board.

6. Best Practice: The district provides appropriate equipment and information to prevent injuries to students and others.

There is a Licensed Practical Nurse, employed by the Hamilton County Health Department, assigned to each school in the district and three Registered Nurses at the full service clinic. All necessary first aid supplies are contained within the health rooms.

Students and school personnel are trained in the appropriate safety procedures for dealing with dangerous tools, equipment, and chemicals. Documentation is on file in the individual areas. The necessary types of protective equipment (goggles, gloves, masks, etc.) are also supplied to minimize the number of injuries to students and others.

7. Best Practice: The district follows environmental and food safety health practices and regulations.

All food service facilities are inspected regularly by the Hamilton County Health Department. Also, appropriate personnel have received information and materials pertaining to their safety-related duties (MSDS sheets, safety committee meetings, wall posters, etc.).

Copies of regulations of the Hamilton County Health Department are kept on site. All federal and state requirements are met. Written emergency procedures and plans are distributed to each cafeteria for each employee to read.

Goal F: The district takes steps to ensure the safety and security of students and staff during transportation.

1. Best Practice: The district has procedures to create safe and orderly process for students arriving at or leaving each school campus.

The district has developed a Safe Driver Plan for Hamilton County Schools.

All school bus service driveways meet the requirements for SREF. This is monitored every 3 years by DOT. All schools have procedures to ensure the safety of children arriving and leaving school, including walkers, car riders, bus riders, etc.

When existing schools are renovated, separate drop-off and pick-up areas are provided and separate vehicular and pedestrian areas are designated if they do not already exist.

2. Best Practice: The district has implemented policies, procedures, and practices that ensure the safety of transported students.

All new school buses purchased by the Hamilton County School Board have the appropriate and required safety restraints. The Director of Transportation designates school bus routes only after conferring with bus drivers, parents, and other interested parties as to potential hazards, and by conducting reviews of the routes and stops. All persons transporting students are properly licensed, trained, and qualified. Documentation is on file in the Hamilton County School Board Transportation Office.

The Hamilton County School Board has adopted a safe driver plan that defines unacceptable levels and types of violations by persons transporting students and specifies consequences for those out of compliance.

School principals report that all students being transported receive instruction in safe riding practices and rules of conduct. This is done at the beginning of each school year. All drivers are given a Hamilton County School Board Drivers Handbook which clearly states the steps drivers are to take and the steps that district staff will take in response to transportation accidents or other emergencies.

3. Best Practice: School buses are inspected and maintained in accordance with state laws and state Department of Education rules.

All school bus operators perform pre-trip inspections of school buses and make

sure that deficiencies are corrected before buses are used to transport students. The inspection forms are on file in the Transportation office. Also, school bus inspections are performed every 20 days by trained and certified technicians. Inspection forms are on file in the transportation office. These procedures are all monitored by DOT.

Buses are returned to service to transport students when all safety and mechanical systems meet the requirements of the Florida School Bus Inspection Manual

APPROVED BY THE HAMILTON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD in regular session on June 24, 2002.

Martha Butler, School Board Chair

Charles F. Blalock, Jr.,

Hamilton County School Board

Superintendent

