

OPPAGA
“SAFE PASSAGE”
REPORT AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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JUNE 25, 2002

OPPAGA Safe Passage

Goal A: The school district ensures that its safety and 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.

Currently, stakeholders throughout Walton County are involved in strategic planning for the Walton 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. Safe school initiatives are being explored, implemented and assessed.

The Superintendent of Schools and the Safe and Drug-Free/Safe Schools Coordinator (Student Services) meet on a regular basis to assess the performance and cost efficiency of the school safety and security program using past performances of safety initiatives and critical safety needs. Potential cost savings of alternatives such as outside contracting and privatization are discussed and explored. The district does have contractual agreements with the Walton County Health Department for school health aides and other health services, and with the Walton County Sheriff's Department to provide seven School Resource Officers (SRO's) for middle and high schools in the district. The SRO's also provide educational and additional security at the elementary levels when requested.

Appropriate data for the SESIR report is updated regularly through GATEWAY (MIS). District Discipline Summaries are reviewed and reported annually. The district receives reviews of the safety and security programs from the Walton County Health Department, OSHA, Panhandle Area Education Consortium (Risk Management), and Staff from the Walton County School Board.

Recommendations

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

Fiscal Impact and Timeline

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 the Safe and Drug-Free/Safe Schools Coordinator (Student Services) meet to review the program and staffing levels and needs of the safety and security program. Ways and means to minimize administrative layers and processes are discussed and reviewed. Recommendations are made and implemented to assure 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. The district also has developed a crisis intervention plan which complements the emergency plan. Interagency 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 (Emergency Plan) is available in every classroom in the district. The types of emergency information included in the plan are: Emergency Telephone Numbers, CPR/First Aid Trained Personnel, Walton County Crisis Codes, Emergency Closing of Schools, Flooding, Nuclear Emergency, Drug Incidents, Chemical Spills and Railroad Accidents, Fire, Serious Injury or Illness, Sexual Battery, Tornadoes, Hurricanes and Thunderstorms, Severe Disruptions (Campus Intruders), Bomb Threat, School Bus Accident, Disaster and Drill Plans 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 Southern Link radios, E-mail and by phone.

A district Crisis Intervention Team, composed of administrators, counselors and other staff has been designated and activated during the school year. Also, each school has appointed school-level personnel to act in certain positions during an emergency.

The district contracted during the current year to have all school building plans posted to CD-ROM format for local emergency agencies. The plans provide entrance/exit, hazardous materials, fire, storage and kitchen information. In previous years, this information was provided in notebook format.

Recommendations

We recommend to continue updating emergency plans and CD-ROMs on an annual basis.

Fiscal Impact and Timeline

Cost will include printing of classroom plans and annual fee for updating CD-ROMs. This will be accomplished on an annual basis.

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

Many area agencies and community members were involved in the development of the Crisis Intervention Plan for the district. These included the Walton County Sheriff's Department, DeFuniak City Police, counselors, school staff and parents. These plans and procedures have been provided to each school principal, counselor, teachers, district-level administrators, members of the support staff, and other school district employees.

Although the plan is very thorough and takes into account most of the 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 INTERVENTION PLAN AND EMERGENCY PLAN be updated during the early part of the 2002-2003 school year. This should be an annual and ongoing process.

Fiscal Impact and Timeline

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

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 in hardcopy notebooks and currently on CD-ROM format.

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 each school office and the district facilities management office.

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

6. Best Practice: The district's Master Plan for In-Service 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. Certain school-level personnel are identified as requiring CPR certification and first aid training. The plan does not specifically identify the minimum safety training required for all school staff. Needs of staff are identified by Master In-service needs assessments submitted by school administrators.

The principals documented that staff have received training based on the in-service needs assessment and the staff members responsibilities. Such training includes First Aid, CPR, the district's Blood-borne Pathogens Exposure, Lab Safety, Conflict Resolution, CPI training, etc.

The district has used training opportunities provided by the DOE and other organizations, such as the Panhandle Area Education Consortium, Walton County Health Department, Walton County Sheriff's Department, and Walton County EMS.
Recommendations

We recommend that the district include in the Master Plan for In-Service a method to identify minimum safety training required for all staff members, as well as the those who require specialized training and incorporate these components into the plan.

Fiscal Impact and Timeline

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 parents.

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

The Walton County School Board is in compliance with 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 firearm possession, threats, serious criminal acts, substance abuse, and victimization. Policies are in place that deal with removal of students from classes, anti-harassment policies, and locker/storage area searches. Rights and responsibilities for students are clearly stated and disciplinary actions defined.

Although the school board 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 policy for interviewing students by the Department of Children and Family Services and law enforcement be included in the Code of Student Conduct for the coming year and thereafter.

Fiscal Impact and Timeline

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

2. Best Practice: The district revises 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 is given to every student enrolled in the district and each one is provided orientation on the document.

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

year, a public workshop was held to seek additional input. A Public Hearing is advertised to the public and held prior to the adoption by the local Board.

Recommendations

We recommend that the district continue to 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 Timeline

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 educators during the 2002-2003 school year.

The district does make available appropriate counseling for students who exhibit early warning signs of violence through the Student Assistance Program, and has procedures in place to maintain legal confidentiality of information regarding these students. Through a cooperative effort with the local Chautauqua Offices for Psychotherapy and Evaluation, two high schools in the district provide the Reconnecting Youth program which does identify at-risk students including those who may be more prone to violent behaviors.
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 Timeline

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.

Information regarding the necessary school-entry health examinations and immunizations for all students is provided via the news media and through memorandums and newsletters to parents. The district also maintains agreements with local agencies and charter schools to deal with zero tolerance for crime and victimization. The SRO program makes community presentations regarding safety issues, assists with fingerprinting and Kid video safety program.

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

All district schools address safety issues by school-level assessments and include this information in their school improvement plans. Schools identify possible safety and security hazards and request assistance,

when necessary, to correct these situations. The district implements many successful curriculum programs through the Safe and Drug-Free Programs which address drug/tobacco use and abuse, conflict resolution, and prevention of violent behaviors.

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 school resource officers assist in doing background checks to track charges and convictions of students and employees.

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

The district implements programs including Life Skills Training, Second Step, TNT, Peace Builders, Reconnecting Youth and character education and evaluates them annually. Published results of the review are available in the district office and filed on the annual Safe and Drug-Free Schools Annual Progress Report.

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. Students, parents and others are made aware of the hotline through memorandums, 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 Life Skills Training, Second Step, Peace Builders, Character First, Kids with Character, TNT, and TATU are made available to the schools as sources of violence prevention and safety-related programs. These programs were selected by the Walton County Safe and Drug-Free Schools Advisory Council, including school representatives, parents and other agency staff, 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 educational facility.

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

The required fire safety inspections are conducted twice per year through a cooperative agreement with the Panhandle Area Education Consortium. Other health and safety reviews are performed by the local health department. All inspection reports are maintained on file in the Facilities Management Department. Any fire or safety concerns are reported directly to Facilities Management for immediate attention.

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

Safety and security principles are used in the maintenance, renovation, and construction of educational facilities in Walton County. An architect is hired only after the District Facilities Director and other school district administrators confer with local school administrators on all issues involving the safety and security of the educational 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 Walton County is clearly marked with signs and procedures for visitors to follow upon entering the facility. At most facilities, staff members are identified by name badges. Each facility also has a policy and procedure for the release of students to parents or other persons designated on the student's emergency card. Buildings are secured when unoccupied and there are site key control systems to account for all keys. The local sheriff's department and city police department make regular inspections of school grounds on non-school days and during non-school hours.

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

Playgrounds are inspected on a regular basis at the schools and during the annual school safety assessment. Playground maintenance and repair is an ongoing endeavor. Each school administrator establishes rules of supervision. Rules are also established for gymnasiums and other playing fields.

Recommendations

It is recommended that a system be initiated whereby all playgrounds undergo a yearly maintenance check by district or designated school-level personnel, unsafe conditions documented, and corrections completed in a timely manner.

Fiscal Impact and Timeline

This should be an ongoing process and be of minimal cost to the district by the utilization of staff currently employed.

5. Best Practice: Each educational facility has appropriate equipment to protect the safety and security of property and records.

None of the district schools have security cameras in place. Plans are underway to place security cameras in a pilot school this school year.

A few of the schools are partially fenced particularly in the playground areas, providing security to parts of the facilities.

School records are kept in secure vaults which are fire-proof.

Recommendations

We recommend that hazards analyses be conducted annually to determine the needs of additional security systems which may enhance the safety and security of property and records.

Fiscal Impact and Timeline

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

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

There are four Health Services Providers employed by the Walton County School District. Eight other health technicians or nurses are employed by the Walton County Health Department to staff clinics at school sites. All necessary first aid supplies are contained within the health room. CPR certified personnel are posted at every school.

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. A Lab Safety video series is provided as in-service training to all personnel working in those areas. Hazardous chemical wash stations are located in every science lab requiring one.

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

All food service facilities are inspected regularly by the Walton 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.). Safety-related in-service is provided by the Panhandle Area Education Consortium and the Walton County Health Department to food service employees. The Walton County Food Service Association meets six times per year to discuss issues including those related to safety.

Copies of food service regulations are kept and posted on site. All federal and state requirements are met. Written emergency procedures and plans are distributed to each cafeteria for each employee to read. Immediate concerns are reported to the Food Services Coordinator for action.

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 transportation department has developed a Transportation Procedures for Bus Safety and School Bus Drivers' handbook for Walton County.

All school bus service driveways meet the requirements for safety as established by DOT. All schools have procedures to ensure the safety of children arriving and leaving school, including walkers, car riders, bus riders, and bicycle riders.

Separate drop-off and pick-up areas are posted and provided at most schools.

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 Walton County School Board have the appropriate and required safety restraints. The Transportation Coordinator 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 Walton County School Board Transportation Office.

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 Walton 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, including buses operated by schools, charter schools, and contractors, 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 by trained and certified mechanics. Inspection forms are on file in the transportation office.

**APPROVED BY THE WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD in regular session
On June 25, 2002**

Donnie Richardson, Chairperson

Coy M. Yates, Superintendent