

School Safety & Security Best Practices

2003-2004 School Safety and Security Self-Assessment Form

Efficiency and Effectiveness

1. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the safety and security program.

The Safety, Security and Environmental Services department continuously gathers and measures “key indicator” data. All decisions are data driven. New data-collection software was put in place to enable the security department to track crime statistics within the district. The 2002 Superintendent’s Security Oversight Committee made several recommendations that the district has implemented, including piloting a program for in-house “proprietary” burglar alarm monitoring and the hiring of a district law enforcement officer.

2. The district ensures the accuracy of its discipline and safety and security related data and reports accurate data to the Department of Education.

OCPS Information Technology (IT) collects, revises and provides updates to the state’s School Environmental Safety Incident Report (SESIR). Schools have access to the district’s Online Data Access (ODA) system and the CICS student system to periodically review their data. District discipline coordinators review this data and provide information to schools and other learning community administrators as necessary. If discrepancies in SESIR data are discovered by district staff, the district contacts DOE personnel to work through any problems with data reporting.

3. The district regularly reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the safety and security program and minimizes unnecessary administrative layers and processes.

OCPS Safety, Security and Environmental Services staff maintains an ongoing network and formal meetings with school district security and police officials across the state and nation. This network allows comparison with other districts of similar size which provides a clear picture to adjust activities and functions.

Safety Planning

4. The district has implemented a school safety plan that includes district wide emergency and safety procedures and identifies those responsible for them.

The district’s Emergency Procedures Manual includes information regarding School Emergency Response Teams (SERT’s) and each school must submit annually a school-specific safety plan. This Safe School Plan requires that each site submit a list of team members with corresponding SERT assignments for those members. Individual school improvement plans address the State of Florida’s eight goals for education, of which Goal 5 specifically relates to safe and orderly school environments. A formal agreement has been established with English and Spanish speaking radio and television stations to provide information to parents and staff during emergencies. The district publicizes this service with letters sent to parents, a Parent’s Guide, newspaper ads and television “spots.” The district’s Web site, accessible to anyone linked to the Internet, contains an “Alert” section that will provide instructions for parents, employees and other concerned citizens in the event of an emergency affecting schools. Bus drivers receive training in behavior management and discipline referral procedures. Students and parents are advised of transportation safety procedures in the Code of Student Conduct. This code also provides information to school employees regarding misconduct intervention procedures. A publication titled “School-based Crisis Guide” is provided to all schools by the district’s Guidance Department. The guide includes “Best Practices” for administrators and teachers in dealing with parents and students in times of crisis. The district’s Student Assistance and Family Empowerment (SAFE) program has implemented a Transition Leadership program for “at-risk” students in the transitional grades (Grade 5 to 6 and 8 to 9). School principals are evaluated annually on various competencies, among which are school climate and school incident reports.

Safety Planning

5. The district develops and maintains its school safety plan and emergency response procedures with stakeholder input.

The district's Emergency Procedures Manual is undergoing a complete update this year. The plan was originally developed and the update is being coordinated in conjunction with local law enforcement and other emergency response agencies as well as district-/school-based staff. Copies of the plan have been distributed to all schools and appropriate personnel inside the organization. Copies of the plan have also been provided to law enforcement, the county disaster preparedness office and other school district security/police agencies locally and throughout the United States. School principals, working with school safety teams and local law enforcement, complete site-specific Safe School Plans and submit them to district security staff for review. School evacuation locations are coordinated with law enforcement and are included in the Safe School Plans.

6. The district conducts an annual review of all relevant health and safety issues for each educational facility.

The district requires all schools to conduct a risk assessment in conjunction with their law enforcement representative and include the findings in their site-specific Safe School Plan. The district requires that plans are reviewed by regional learning community administrators and submitted to Safety, Security and Environmental Services. The district's safety department inspects all district facilities annually, completing an Annual Comprehensive Facility Inspection (ACFI). A database of findings is maintained and discrepancies are corrected by the district's maintenance staff. Discrepancies regarding the fire alarm system are corrected by district maintenance staff as quickly as they are discovered. School-based SAFE coordinators conduct annual substance abuse surveys in middle and high schools. The information is gathered and a formal report is developed by district SAFE staff.

7. The district has developed emergency response procedures.

The district's Emergency Management Plan contains incident-specific checklists with appropriate response actions listed for each. The district's emergency communications plan specifies redundant communication capabilities including e-mail, voice mail and landline "telephone trees" operated by the five district learning communities. The district is accepting proposals for a "reverse 911" service, which allows calls to be made to parents in the event of a school or district emergency. The district has entered into an agreement with a local 24-hour news station to serve as the official emergency television network. This station will broadcast emergency messages to parents as well as school/district staff. The Emergency Procedures Manual requires that the Community Relations staff is notified in the event of a school emergency. This allows staff to begin working with responding security and law enforcement personnel, crisis counselors or other personnel/agencies, to initiate communications with parents, the media and concerned citizens. In their Safe School Plans, schools list specific locations for media staging areas, parent pick-up areas and others that link to the Incident Command model used by public safety agencies. Schools have been provided with OCPS media kits that prepare staff for communicating with the media before a crisis occurs. Regular training is also provided to administrators on crisis communications. The district's Guidance Department has guidance counselors who respond to schools when a crisis requiring counseling services occurs. The district SAFE Program has established a District Crisis Team, which can support schools during crises requiring counseling intervention.

8. The district has provided each school with an emergency checklist.

The district provides every teacher with a double-sided Quick Reference Guide printed on durable glossy card stock. The guide contains specific responsibilities of individual teachers and School Emergency Response Team members during emergency situations. The guide also serves as an abbreviated checklist on procedures that must be taken during the most common school emergencies. The checklist contains emergency contact information, including the district's 24-hour security control center. The Emergency Management Plan was developed in conjunction with local emergency response agencies and provides district-wide standards, checklists and procedures for use by school administrators and School Emergency Response Team members.

Safety Planning

9. The district and each school regularly practice emergency responses based on potential safety concerns at each site.

The district's Management Directive A-8 requires all schools to conduct two emergency evacuation drills within the first two weeks of each new school year and one per month thereafter for a total of not less than 10 for the school year. During the months of February and March, severe weather drills are required. Schools are also encouraged to conduct lock-down drills as a part of their safety drills. Drill activity is submitted directly into an online database maintained by the safety department. Schools must also identify site-specific hazards annually in their Safe School Plans and develop strategies to address these hazards.

10. The district provides emergency response agencies with floor plans and blueprints as appropriate.

The district has provided floor plans on CD to all fire, police and emergency management officials in Orange County. However, due to budget limitations and staffing changes, the district has been unable to update the floor plans to reflect modifications to existing facilities. The section is now staffed and is currently working on updates to the blueprints.

11. The district's Master Plan for In-Service Training identifies district and school personnel training needs and provides for appropriate levels of safety training, including classroom management and violence and alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs training, for all appropriate personnel.

District security staff provides in-service training on School Emergency Response Teams and general student and staff safety issues. In-service training is also available for facilities/maintenance, food service, technology, media specialists, administrative leadership, classified, substitute teacher and school-based employees. Available training programs include Classroom Organization and Behavior Management, Improving Behavior and Discipline in Schools, Management of Student Conduct, Does Your Team Understand the Playbook? (School Emergency Response Teams) and Keeping Kids Safe – What You Need to Know (general staff and student safety). In-service training is also offered for new teachers (Great Beginnings for teachers) and new principals (Preparing New Principals Program). Other trainings offered include Violence in Youth, Crisis Prevention and Peace by Piece. Individual supervisors are responsible for providing safety equipment as appropriate to activities and duties of his/her employees. Operations and Maintenance surveys safety equipment needs and recommends needed equipment. The safety department inspects each facility annually and examines safety equipment, or lack of it, at each work location. Deficiencies are noted and reported for corrective action. School nurses and health-room assistants receive training specific to and required by their positions. Area Superintendents review in-service and staff development scheduled for each school based on the needs assessment survey.

Discipline Policies and Code of Student Conduct

12. The district and each school have a code of student conduct based on stakeholder input and revised on an annual basis.

The Code of Student Conduct is updated annually by a committee comprised of parents, students, teachers, principals and representatives from district departments. This annual review gathers input relating to the Code of Student Conduct and makes recommendations for changes and revisions due to new laws and regulations. Great care is taken during this process to ensure that the code is easily understood by parents and students. In addition to English, the code is translated into five other languages. A copy is provided to every student who enrolls in any Orange County public school and is available electronically on the district's Web site.

13. The district's code of student conduct and other policies provide clear procedures for handling disciplinary actions.

The Code of Student Conduct provides guidance on a wide range of disciplinary responses for specific violations ranging from in-school suspension to expulsion, depending upon the severity (level) of the offense. A "zero tolerance" policy is required for specific offenses that could result in alternative placement to one of several district educational programs. The code of conduct addresses bullying and harassment, school locker searches and discipline policies for disabled students. The district's General Counsel has drafted a memorandum explaining the procedures for law enforcement and Department of Children and Families interviews resulting from discipline issues.

School Climate and Community Outreach

14. The district has a process in place to minimize danger to students from community members, staff, or other students, and minimize danger to teachers from students.

District security staff assists school administrators researching criminal information on the FDLE Web site regarding sexual offenders and predators. School staff is strongly encouraged to use this site regularly to check on any offenders who may have moved into the school community. The district's Human Resources and Employee Relations departments have programs in place to screen all job applicants and to monitor the arrests and convictions of current employees. Charges and convictions are tracked in conformance with applicable federal and state laws, regulations and district policies. ABO 746, the Student Registration Form, requires disclosure of a student's prior disciplinary history. The district's Guidance Department maintains a database of students involved in the Juvenile Justice System. Felony notices are provided to principals immediately upon notification by law enforcement.

15. Each school has a system in place to identify students that exhibit early warning signs of, or pose a threat of future violent behavior.

A threat-assessment process has been established by the district to screen potential situations that may result in future violent behavior. In-service training includes Violence in Youth, Crisis Prevention and Peace by Piece. SAFE coordinators, employed in all secondary schools, conduct school climate surveys to determine threat trends. The coordinators assist students while offering training to school staff in Anti-Bullying, FDLRS Behavior Initiative Programs, Non-violence and School SAFE Teams. SAFE coordinators work with school behavioral specialists and can request assistance through district partnerships with mental health agencies. Principals and other appropriate school administrators receive training on the Code of Student Conduct at the beginning of each school year.

16. The district identifies and implements parent and community outreach strategies to promote safety in the home and community.

Safety committees at each school include teachers, administrators and community members. The committees address concerns unique to the community served by each school. School Resource Officer Advisory Committee meetings are hosted by the district during which issues regarding school safety are the primary topic. The district is a member of the Central Florida Crime Prevention Association and sends a representative to its monthly meetings. Crime trends specific to neighborhoods or other locations within the community are discussed and strategies implemented. The Central Florida Crimeline sponsors the Speak-Out Hotline that receives tips from students regarding school crime and other safety concerns. Information that is gathered by Crimeline operators is forwarded directly to school administrators and school resource officers for their action. School based SAFE Coordinators, Drug Free School Advisory boards and district partnerships with mental health agencies identify at-risk students and extended families for needed services. Programs offered through SAFE are evaluated twice per year with results presented to the SAFE and Drug Free School Advisory Board and the state Safe and Drug Free Schools' Department. Immunization information and school entry physical examination information is updated yearly and provided to parents in conjunction with the Orange County Health Department.

Safety Programs and Curricula

17. The district fosters a positive learning climate and culture by assessing the school climate and implementing relevant scientifically based curricula and programs at each school.

The district provides training to school guidance counselors regarding bullying, threats, conflict resolution and similar issues that cause disruption to the educational process. The district maintains a reference library available to all school staff containing materials specific to these issues. School Advisory Councils utilize "school climate surveys" and senior class "exit surveys" to make decisions regarding school safety and strategies/programs that may be required to address identified concerns. Pro-social skills training is embedded in K-2 elementary curriculum, and middle schools offer D.A.R.E. programs in 5th and 7th grades. High schools offer 40-Asset Development, Career Education and Tech Prep. Character Education is provided in all schools through a designated representative equipped with training manuals and an implementation plan. Conflict Resolution is provided through SAFE coordinators in all secondary and select elementary schools and Peace by Piece is offered in elementary and middle schools. Peer Mediation is also provided by school counselors and SAFE coordinators. SAFE also offers programs such as Life Management Skills, Anti-Bullying Knight Vision and Prevention Clubs. Principals are evaluated annually on a variety of school safety issues, including actions taken regarding assessing school climate and strategies taken to address specific problems that are identified.

Safety Programs and Curricula

18. The district has an approved Safe and Drug-Free School Plan that has been developed with appropriate stakeholder input.

The district SAFE and Drug-Free School Advisory Board developed the district's Safe and Drug Free School plan. A report, completed bi-annually, is presented to the advisory board and to the state SAFE and Drug Free Schools' Department. Employees are required to abide by rules and regulations in the Code of Student Conduct that stipulates appropriate behavior for participation in extracurricular activities and co-curricular activities.

19. Based on the district's prevention needs assessment process, the district implements scientifically based violence and drug prevention programs and curricula for each school.

School Resource Officers assigned to schools by local law enforcement agencies provide instruction using D.A.R.E., GREAT (gang resistance) and Super Kids (alternative to D.A.R.E.) curricula. The district's SAFE department offers Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs (ATOD) and Violence Prevention programs based upon established "Best Practices." Schools use these best practices to develop strategies and programs specific to the needs of their community and submit written plans to the district's SAFE office. Character Education, New Horizons with the Center for Drug Free Living, Life Management Skills and other intervention programs provide guidance and instruction to students about correct choices and decision making. SAFE coordinators, social workers and guidance counselors assist students on a regular basis. The annual Partners in Change Conference addresses issues affecting school safety.

20. Each school has a system in place to identify, assess, and minimize the risk for students indicating a threat of, or exhibiting suicidal behavior.

Specific training on suicide prevention is provided to school-based SAFE coordinators by district SAFE staff. School coordinators then provide information and training to school staff. The district collaborates with mental health services and providers to ensure that school counselors are trained to recognize early warning signs indicating suicidal behavior. The district's Guidance Department provides school staff with training and instructional resources to address behavioral and academic concerns.

Facilities and Equipment

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

The principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) are incorporated in site planning and design of facilities. Landscaping guidelines specifically address varieties of low plant cover to limit hiding places near buildings. The district's Standards and Design department conducts reviews of school plans with safety staff during the construction planning process.

22. The district has procedures that govern access to each educational facility and its students and access is limited to authorized students and visitors.

The district provides photograph identification badges for all district- and school-based employees. Schools employ strict access control procedures and provide identification badges to regular volunteers and visitor badges to temporary guests. New schools are designed with limited entry points with central receiving areas for guests. Existing schools are renovated with entry control in mind and procedures are in place to limit access of unauthorized personnel. Most facilities are fenced for added perimeter protection. Intrusion alarm (burglar alarm) systems are in place at district schools to prevent unauthorized entry after school hours. Entry is controlled at most high schools by security attendants posted at driveway entrances. All school staff is assigned student supervision duties at arrival, during lunches and other break periods and at dismissal. Staff not only supervises student conduct but also observes perimeter entry points to identify unauthorized visitors. Signage is placed at all public entrances requiring that visitors check in at the school office. Directional signs are placed in strategic locations to guide visitors to the main office.

Facilities and Equipment

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

The district's Design and Construction department specifies guidelines for playground design. Playground equipment vendors must be members of the International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA) and products must conform to U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines. Annual inspections of playground equipment are part of the Annual Comprehensive Facility Inspection (ACFI) conducted by the district's safety office. Findings are maintained in a database and communicated directly to the maintenance office, which must complete repairs within 30 days of notification. School staff are assigned playground supervisory duties during the school day and extended day activities to promote safe interaction and use of equipment. School administrators monitor playground activities to ensure there is adequate supervision and that the equipment is maintained in a safe condition.

24. Each educational facility has appropriate equipment to protect the safety and security of property and records.

District schools are equipped with intrusion alarm systems designed to limit unauthorized entry after hours that often result in burglary and vandalism, etc. Systems are maintained by an approved vendor and repairs are completed within 12 hours of notification including holidays and weekends. Site-specific Safe School plans require each school to assemble trauma and first aid kits with items recommended by district security staff.

25. The district provides appropriate safety equipment and information to prevent injuries to students and others.

Protective equipment appropriate to the educational program is provided in instructional spaces such as labs, industrial arts shops, etc. The Safety department's Annual Comprehensive Facility Inspection (ACFI) notes discrepancies for correction. Classes that require the use and handling of chemicals or dangerous tools are preceded by a safety discussion with students and signed acknowledgement forms from parents. District facilities are equipped with fire extinguishers distributed according to NFPA 101 and FAC 4A-58. Schools must complete a monthly fire extinguisher check and report findings to the safety department. Findings are maintained in a database and discrepancies are noted for corrective action. All school health clinics maintain first aid kits and current copies of health regulations pertaining to school attendance are posted.

26. The district follows environmental and food safety health practices and regulations.

Food Service managers and employees must follow procedures as set forth in the District School Food Services Policy Manual. Mandatory training is conducted for managers and employees and handbooks are provided to all Food Service employees. State and local health regulations are maintained by the Food Service manager at each location. Managers are required to submit a chemical inventory of items stored/used on each site as well as food handler certifications to the district's Environmental Affairs department. The district's transportation section follows all applicable environmental laws and regulations and provides training, safety materials and information to appropriate employees.

Transportation

27. The district has procedures to create a safe and orderly process for students arriving at or leaving each school campus.

District Standards and Design guideline DGM 02740 titled "Paving, Parking and Roadway Requirements," defines exact standards in conjunction with existing local and state laws. School administrators devise an arrival and dismissal plan in conjunction with district safety and transportation staff. The plan accounts for pedestrian, vehicular and school bus traffic while providing a separation of types as best as each site allows. The district's Safety Transportation Plan requires annual reviews of route hazards, bus stops and school loading zones. Discrepancies or unsafe situations are recorded and reported immediately to the Transportation Safety Manager for corrective action.

Transportation

28. The district has implemented policies, procedures, and practices that ensure the safety of transported students.

Bus drivers receive a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) training program in accordance with Florida Motor Vehicle Law, D.O.E. and State Board Rule 6A-3.014 and 6A-3.017 and the Orange County Transportation Operations Handbook. School buses are purchased in accordance with State Board Rule 6A-3.003 Florida Bus Specifications, which defines new bus safety equipment and criteria. The district's Emergency Management Plan specifies actions to take during school bus accidents on or off campus. The Code of Student Conduct specifies standards of conduct for students transported by school bus.

29. 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.

The district's transportation policy requires that each driver perform a pre-trip inspection of the entire vehicle before each scheduled route or field trip. Inspection forms are submitted by the drivers and reviewed for discrepancies. The forms are then maintained in a permanent file and discrepancies noted are repaired immediately or the bus is removed from service. Every school bus in service, including spares, is inspected every 20 school days in accordance with the Department of Education's Inspection Manual.