

**ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT**

**Meeting Date:** April 8, 2013

**AGENDA ITEM No.** 13-04-13

**ACTION ITEM (Y/N)** N

**SUBJECT:** Safer Schools Committee Report

**INFO. CONTACT** Michael Gilbert **PHONE:** 919-732-8126

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Safer Schools Committee Meeting Minutes - March 22, 2013.
2. Emergency Management Planning.
3. Safe Havens International School Safety Assessment - Scope of Work.

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**PURPOSE:** To present the Board of Education the recommendations of the Safer Schools Committee.

**BACKGROUND:** The Safer Schools Committee was established by the Board of Education at their February 25, 2013 meeting. Board Chair Donna Coffey appointed Dr. Stephen H. Halkiotis, Vice Chair (serving as Committee Chair), Ms. Brenda Stephens (OCS Board Member) and Mr. Tony McKnight (OCS Board Member) to serve on the committee. The remainder of the committee was comprised of Orange County Sheriff Lindy Pendergrass and his designees, Town of Hillsborough Police Chief Duane Hampton and his designees, and Superintendent Patrick Rhodes and his designees.

The Safer Schools Committee was formed to provide the Board of Education with recommendations for more permanent and sustainable solutions to enhance security in all schools within the district. The committee was charged with completing the following:

- Identify ways, including short-and long-range cost projections and timelines, to improve and possibly expand the use of School Resource Officers within all of our schools
- Review existing K-12 school safety plans, protocols and procedures and recommend improvements (including cost projections and timelines) as necessary, to create an even safer learning environment than currently exists in those areas
- Refer any policy implications to the Board's Policy Subcommittee for review

The Committee convened on March 22, 2013 and discussed the following:

- The role of School Resource Officers (S.R.O.s)
- The possibility of expanding School Resource Officers to the elementary schools, with associated costs
- Summaries of school safety plans
- Proposed physical plant improvements
- Budget considerations, funding allocated to the School Safety Review and associated costs from the Orange County Sheriff's Office for S.R.O.s at each elementary school

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** To be determined by the scope of the Safer Schools Committee's recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Superintendent recommends that the Board of Education receive the recommendations of the Safer Schools Committee.

Safer Schools Committee Meeting  
Minutes  
March 22, 2013

In attendance: Stephen H. Halkiotis, Vice Chair (serving as Committee Chair), Ms. Brenda Stephens (OCS Board Member), Mr. Tony McKnight (OCS Board Member), Orange County Sheriff Pendergrass, Captain Archie Daniel (OCSD), Lt. Troy Comar (OCSD), Lt. Robert Whitted (HPD), Sgt. Doug Hemmingway (HPD), Superintendent Patrick Rhodes, Alex Herring (Discipline Officer), Frank Meadows (Safety Officer), Buster Crabtree (Dir. of Maintenance), Roger Ivey (Assist. Dir. of Maintenance) and Michael Gilbert (PIO).

Dr. Halkiotis thanked the committee for their service to the students and staff of Orange County Schools and stated that the security of the district's schools is paramount. He stated that the Safer Schools Committee was formed to provide the Board of Education with recommendations for more permanent and sustainable solutions to enhance security in all schools within the district.

Dr. Halkiotis then read the committee's charge:

- Identify ways, including short-and long-range cost projections and timelines, to improve and possibly expand the use of School Resource Officers within all of our schools
- Review existing K-12 school safety plans, protocols and procedures and recommend improvements (including cost projections and timelines) as necessary, to create an even safer learning environment than currently exists in those areas
- Refer any policy implications to the Board's Policy Subcommittee for review

The recommendations of the committee will be presented at the April 8 Board of Education meeting. The community will be able to review the recommendations and make comments and provide feedback to the committee via email and the website.

Dr. Halkiotis asked the committee to review the proposed School Resource Officer (SRO) contract from the Wake County Public School System, which was provided by the School Board's attorney. This document outlines the duties of SROs and provides 15 points that detail the specific duties and responsibilities of SROs in schools.

Dr. Halkiotis explained that during the previous month's meeting, Capt. Nida, Lt. Comar, Dr. Halkiotis and district staff reviewed the function of the L.E.A.R. (Law Enforcement and Administrative Review) committee and moved to change the name and purpose of the committee, as well as set dates for upcoming meetings. The group also reviewed the document from Wake County and asked that the staff from the Orange County Sheriff's Department provide Sheriff Pendergrass with a copy of the document to review.

Sheriff Pendergrass provided the committee with the Orange County Sheriff's Department's (OCSD) original code of ethics and duties and responsibilities. He stated that the agreement originally signed by the former superintendent and chair of the county commissioners outlined the duties and responsibilities of the SROs in the schools and fully covers the scope of their duties.

Dr. Halkiotis discussed that the only document the district has had in their possession was the one page document from the Student Code of Conduct that only briefly outlines the role of SROs in the schools.

Mr. Rhodes stated that the document Dr. Halkiotis referred to is from the Board of Education's Student Code of Conduct. After the initial L.E.A.R. meeting, one of the SROs provided district staff with a copy of the original memorandum of understanding (MOU) indicating it would have to be updated. The superintendent wanted to have counsel review the document and get the signatures of the current administration and Board on the document.

Dr. Halkiotis and Lt. Comar discussed that due to change in building principals, they did not feel that the school administrators in the district understood the appropriate role of the SROs as stated in the original MOU.

Dr. Halkiotis asked that the district's attorney, Lt. Comar and Alex Herring set up a training for all principals and assistant principals on the roles and responsibilities of SROs. Lt. Comar has provided this type of training for administrators through UNC Chapel Hill as part of their program and this type of training would be beneficial to help our staff understand the specific responsibilities of SROs in our schools.

Ms. Stephens stated she is glad that the committee is meeting to provide a crystal clear understanding of how the district needs to operate with respect to SROs and student discipline.

Dr. Halkiotis asked the committee to review the General Order No. 17001.0- *School Resource Deputy: Duties/Responsibilities General Regulations*, which includes 16 clearly stated responsibilities and duties of the SROs.

Sheriff Pendergrass explained that the General Order defines the SROs' duties, hours, chain of command and training.

Dr. Halkiotis asked the Superintendent to provide the Board with copies of the original MOU and General Order No. 17001.0. Because of the thoroughness of these documents, the Board will not need the MOU provided by the attorney. The documents should also be provided to school administration and form the basis for the upcoming staff training.

Mr. Rhodes asked that Lt. Comar work with district staff to develop a training this spring for the principals, assistant principals and staff to outline the duties and boundaries of SROs.

Sheriff Pendergrass shared that the change in administration may have slightly altered the duties of the SROs, but he has had very positive feedback on the overall SRO program.

Mr. Rhodes asked that the new MOU include the General Order and that the language be provided to the parents and staff through the school district's Code of Conduct.

Mr. Herring stated that the specificity from the General Order will be included in the upcoming Student Code of Conduct.

Dr. Halkiotis asked Mr. Rhodes to provide the committee with an overview of the district's response to the events in Connecticut and the feedback he received from parents.

Mr. Rhodes said that he spoke with Sheriff Pendergrass and Chief Hampton on the day following the tragedy in Connecticut. Both volunteered to place law enforcement personnel in our schools for the week of December 17-24. Sheriff Pendergrass was then able to place deputies at Pathways, New Hope, Efland-Cheeks and Grady A. Brown elementary schools through the second week in March. Since it had not been budgeted for, the district had to pull back from having SROs in these schools. However, both deputies and officers have been great about conducting close patrols and have had an increased presence in the schools. The district has received numerous calls and emails supporting our decision to place SROs in the elementary schools. The reception from our parents has been overwhelmingly positive.

Dr. Halkiotis stated that the Board of Education started this discussion with respect to the budget season coming up, whether or not we would like to expand the SROs from the middle and high schools to the elementary schools. The tragedy in Connecticut offered the opportunity for our citizens to voice their feelings about school safety and interestingly enough, the Board has only received one email that was not in favor of SROs in our schools. The SROs have brought a sense of security and comfort to our parents and staff, and when you read the emails they feel good about the role the SROs play in our society.

Dr. Halkiotis stated that the Sheriff has put together the potential cost of placing an SRO in each of our elementary schools and asked the committee to review the potential costs associated with using retired deputies to serve as SROs. The cost for reserve deputies would be \$184,000 for the 2013-14 school year. This decision will have to go before the full Board for a vote in open session.

Mr. Rhodes explained that there is a Safe Schools Contingency line item of \$220,000 in his recommended budget.

Lt. Whitted stated that because they have a smaller department, they play an active part in the schools, but do not have the staffing to place SROs in the schools. The Hillsborough Police Department works very hard with his staff to build a rapport with students and staff members in and outside of the schools, but cannot be in the schools on a daily basis.

Sheriff Pendergrass stated that his department previously had the C.A.R.E. (Child Abuse Reduction Education) program in the elementary schools and he has made arrangements for his reserve deputies to receive that training again.

Mr. Rhodes thanked the Sheriff and Hillsborough Police Department for their work on behalf of the students of Orange County Schools. While there are many people who have cited the "school to prison pipeline," that has never been an issue in our schools. Orange County Schools have separated administrative discipline functions from the duties of our SROs.

Mr. Herring explained that our schools view our SROs as role models and the administration fully understands that not every issue rises to the level of law enforcement involvement.

Ms. Stephens stated that she has a very strong opinion about having armed individuals in our schools. She feels far better knowing that the Sheriff will have trained deputies and not hired guns from the outside in our schools. She is also very happy to hear about the C.A.R.E. program and the things that our law enforcement partners can bring to our schools.

Mr. Meadows provided the committee with an overview of the schools' safety plans. Each individual school's safety plan has 14 steps in each, in terms of identifying incident command, working with emergency services and identifying individual staff members and their roles in an emergency situation. Mr. Meadows has inspected each school's critical incident kit, which contains detailed information about the school, emergency plans, relocation plans and class rosters. All of the kits and safety plans are complete and up to date.

Dr. Halkiotis requested that Mr. Meadows provide the entire Board of Education with an overview of our emergency and evacuation plans for the upcoming meeting.

Mr. Rhodes asked that a brief description on the individual school safety plans and processes that are currently in place be posted on the district's web page. Mr. Rhodes then informed the committee that Michael Dorn, a nationally recognized expert in school safety, and his company, Safe Havens, would be conducting a safety evaluation of each individual school during the week of April 15. Mr. Dorn will be presenting his findings to the Board of Education at a meeting on April 19.

Mr. Meadows provided the committee with an overview of Mr. Dorn's qualifications and the criteria he will be evaluating the schools on; including safety plans, culture, processes and physical structures. His presentation will include their findings and recommendations to improve site-based security.

Dr. Halkiotis referenced the security issues submitted by the school-based safety teams and asked Mr. Meadows and Mr. Crabtree their opinions regarding the need for physical plant security improvements.

Mr. Crabtree discussed several areas that are on the current Capital Investment Plan (CIP), as well as several other areas that can be addressed to improve building security. He also stated that several of the requested improvements could not be completed without significant capital investment and architectural planning.

Mr. Meadows stated that there has been a significant shift in school construction over the past 20 years from educational design to designing schools for security. The majority of our schools were not originally designed for safety and the district is working to retrofit the buildings to improve security.

Dr. Halkiotis stated that due to the turnover of school administration, both principals and assistant principals, it is critical to provide ongoing security training and support for our staff.

Mr. McKnight stated that the current focus on school security is a great first step for the district, but we need to keep safety in the forefront of our initiatives. Based upon the feedback that he has been receiving from parents, he is in favor of doing what is required to improve the security of our students, be it physical improvements or adding SROs.

Ms. Stephens added that while SROs are a piece of the program, the district needs to look at school safety as a whole and improve school safety across the board.

Dr. Halkiotis shared his concerns for improving school security and expressed the need of the district to improve security at all levels.

Dr. Halkiotis thanked the committee for their work, especially Sheriff Pendergrass and his staff and the staff of the Hillsborough Police Department. He stated that the Safer Schools Committee would present their findings to the full Board of Education at their April 8 meeting.

## Orange County Schools Emergency Management Planning

In 2008, Orange County Schools was awarded the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Grant from the U.S. Department of Education – Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. This funding afforded the district the opportunity to develop comprehensive emergency management plans in collaboration with local law enforcement personnel and emergency responders.

Each of the district's individual schools completed a site-specific School Safety Plan, which are updated throughout the course of the year. These documents have been designed to allow for a level of flexibility, but contain school-specific information on incident command, first responders, evacuation sites, emergency contact information and emergency staging areas. Each of the site-specific plans include the following:

- School information
- Identified School Command Post and communication resources
- School Crisis Response Team, rules and contact information
- Student rosters (also placed in the "GO" kit)
- Interior safe assembly areas
- Exterior assembly areas
- Two off-campus emergency evacuation locations – transportation not required
- Two off-campus emergency evacuation locations – transportation required
- Emergency Response Kits
- Emergency resources (school specific)
- Emergency evacuation staging areas for individuals with disabilities
- Disabled individuals in need of evacuation assistance and post evacuation plans
- Student-parent reunification procedures
- Location of all utility shut offs

The safety plans also include district protocols for school lockdowns, emergency situations, drills, medical emergencies and sundry checklists. These plans provide school administrators and district staff with the detailed information they would need to prepare for, mitigate and respond to events in their schools.

Each of the district's schools participate in monthly fire drills, quarterly lockdown drills and the annual inclement weather/tornado drills. As an added layer of preparation, the administration actively participates in building-level and district-wide table top drills. The district has also implemented safety and security exercises as part of the district's Leadership Team meetings.

## **Safe Havens International School Safety Assessment Scope of Work**

Safe Havens International is the world's leading international non-profit campus safety center, committed to helping schools and school systems improve crisis preparedness and campus safety. For over 10 years, they have worked with schools on national and international levels in planning, coordinating, and evaluating a wide range of school crisis simulations. Safe Havens analysts view improvements in school safety, security and emergency preparedness as powerful tools for school improvement.

Safe Havens' analysts collaborate closely with their clients to develop practical and effective solutions designed to create lasting and positive change. An emphasis is placed on a community-based approach, incorporating the skills, knowledge and abilities of local public safety and community partners as well as human resources within the client's organization.

Safe Havens' staff have more global experience than any other school safety firm; they have worked in over two dozen countries and are well versed in the latest global and national trends in school safety. Their experiences in Asia, Central America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East, Canada and the United States help make schools safer anywhere in the world.

### **Prior to the visit:**

Mr. Michael Dorn, Executive Director of Safe Havens International, will review the following OCS documents:

- Schools are asked to complete and submit:
  - ✓ Student Supervision Assessment Tool
  - ✓ Security Self Assessment Tool
- School safety plans
- Crisis Response and Disaster Mitigation Plans
- School safety policies, procedures and practices

### **During the Visit (April 15-18):**

Mr. Chris Dorn and Dr. Sonayia Shepherd will assess individual school security in the following areas:

- Front entry design/proposed vestibule design concepts
- School Resource Officer/security staffing
- Security measures
- Access control systems and procedures
- Camera surveillance systems and procedures
- Intrusion detection systems and procedures
- Communications systems and procedures
- Visitor management systems and procedures
- Interior space management
- Presence of potential targeting identifiers that can aid an attacker in locating a victim
- Food and beverage security
- School body language
- School climate and culture

### **Assessment Presentation (April 19):**

Mr. Michael Dorn will present to the Board of Education and to school administrators, cabinet, district personnel and community partners.