

**Clarkstown Central School District
District Safety Meeting
Notes
October 17, 2024**

Introduction and Agenda Items

Introductions

Districtwide Safety Committee - Cross sections of district stakeholders (parents, staff, administrators, first responders)

Administration Speakers

Dr. Marc Baiocco, Asst. Supt. John LaNave, Director of Facilities Anthony Valenti,
District Safety Officer Maureen Sullivan

Guests - Clarkstown Police Department

Chief Jeff Wanamaker

Captain James Fay

Det. and Public Information Officer Norm Peters

Sgt. Dan Burke

Board Members

Jason Bass - new to the committee, in attendance

David Gosman

John Maltbie

Agenda

Overview of District Safety Program

Updates

Camera and Card Access Updates

Bus Camera Update

FFMS Floor Tile Replacement

D.A.R.E. Evolution

Social Media and School Threats - Current Climate

Social Media Practices for Parents

Decisions about Communications

In the News

Gov. Hochul Cell Phone Ban Listening Tour

Maureen Sullivan (discussing agenda items):

Safety Plan - Overview of current CCSD Safety Program

- District and Building Safety and Emergency Plans and Teams
- 55 CCSD Security Personnel (majority from law enforcement)
- Six School Resource Officers from Clarkstown Police Dept. (CPD)

- In addition, Sgt. Dan Burke provides support for elementary schools
- Omnipresence Policing in partnership with CPD
 - CPD Officers stop at schools in their patrol area daily, use CCSD parking facilities, and participate in school safety drills
- Newly updated digital security surveillance cameras in schools and school buses
- Police-grade walkie talkies throughout the school buildings
- Employee Emergency Alert System (Share911)
- Single Point of Entry for Building Visitors
 - Employee ID Entry System
 - Raptor Visitor Management System
- Online Software
 - Anonymous Alert Reporting System
<https://www.ccsd.edu/dept/safety/anonymous-alerts>
 Via app or online, allows anonymous reporting of threats or incidents by students and staff and community
 - Go Guardian Computer Use Monitoring
 CCSD computer network monitors online use and provides alerts to principals and staff when online activity includes searches for inappropriate content, self harm, threats, weapons, etc.
- Ongoing CPD building audit process and District facilities and safety inspections.
- Internally locking in each classroom

School Safety Drills

- Each school completes a minimum of 12 safety drills
 - (4) Four lockdown drills
 - (8) Eight evacuation drills to include:
 - (3) Blocked or secondary exit drills
 - (4) Primary exit drills
 - (1) Off-site evacuation location drill
- No guidance is provided by NYSED on how to teach safety to students. Teachers develop their own curriculum for this work. Conversations vary by grade-level.
- NYSED change this year requires parents to be notified 7-10 days prior to each drills

Mandatory Staff Safety Training

- 12 courses required minimum

Facilities

Anthony Valenti

FFMS Floor Tile Replacement Update

- \$4.5 million project for the replacement of asbestos tiles throughout Felix Festa Middle School. Funding through capital reserves and general fund from approved budget under tax cap. The project has been designed and put together for submission to the state, and the plan is to have all of the abatement and replacement completed by September 2025. Some Felix Festa Summer 2025 programs will be relocated.
- The floor tiles replacement is beginning with FFMS but will continue on to the elementary schools, as part of the recent \$110 million HVAC bond.

- It will be a multiyear program of replacement. Ultimately, it will provide a nice look and have a tremendous visual impact/improvement.
- At FFMS, we have had several building improvement programs including windows, storefront, painted walls, and will replace floor tiles. There was also a complete refurbishment of the library.
- Per John LaNave, floor tile replacement, Bardonia roof, upgrade and change out of all playgrounds were all done tax and debt neutral.

Security Cameras

Marc Baiocco

- Improved security of the buildings with a \$3.5 million project to update card access and camera access.
- Increased the number of cameras by 400% and increased the quality of the images from analog to HD, with the ability to zoom in and out.
- NYS does not allow facial recognition but we had AI technology built into the system, allowing for searches by descriptive factors such as type of clothing, personal characteristics, etc.
- We are constantly looking at upgrades but are also waiting for new technology to be vetted and proven.
- New employee ID cards were issued and are encrypted which prevents duplication and fraud.
- County wide initiative to partner with Bus Protocol for new cameras on school buses. Through this partnership, CCSD received all new HD stop arm cameras along with all new HD cameras for the interior of EVERY bus at no cost. Serious upgrade which has provided improved recording audio and visual.
- Camera views and quality helps to deal with bullying issues, fights, and to substantiate claims.
- Although CCSD has no involvement in issuing summons associated with passing a stopped school bus when children are disembarking as captured on the new stop arm cameras, we were informed by the County Executive that the Sheriff's Dept. issued more than 17,000 tickets to Rockland to drivers in the first year of the program.

D.A.R.E.

D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education (<https://dare.org/>))

Supt. Marc Baiocco

Chief Jeff Wanamaker

- The D.A.R.E program is an important part of CCSD programming and an effective collaboration encouraging positive relationships between students and CPD officers.
- D.A.R.E. has historically been offered to our 5th grade students.
- **Exciting evolution of the program - Beginning next year, D.A.R.E. will now be presented at FFMS to our 6th grade students, and components will continue in grades 7 and 8th. The 5th grade program has sunset.**
- This will bring D.A.R.E.'s lessons on drug, vape and alcohol resistance, as well as positive social media use to an older audience of students.
- FFMS Principal Mike St. John is excited about this change. He and his team are currently looking at how to maximize this opportunity for students of all grades. They are looking at curriculum blocks, exploratories, and how health teachers can partner with CPD instructions. He envisions it as not just a 6th grade piece, but growing the program in 7th and 8th in collaboration with Festa teachers.

- Sgt Dan Burke agrees. He notes how vaping is increasing and good as the curriculum for grade 5 was, he feels the information will be timely for students as they transition to middle school. With the move of the DARE program to grade 6, every class will start developing relationships with the CPD and hopefully this will carry through to the upper grades

Chief Wananamker expressed his concern about vaping, alcohol use and inappropriate social media use.

- We would like SRO's to be seen as law enforcement as well as part of the education system. We have been working with the SROs and the schools to achieve this outcome.
- Teaching students about the dangers of social media can help students to realize to think before hitting send and boasting.
- The CPD *Smart Sales* team which focuses on underage drinking, is seeing a greater increase in vaping sales to teens. Vaping is increasing: 21% increase in the past 4 years. D.A.R.E. education focuses on this area
- It was decided that 6th grade would be the best age to present to the students. Students are more receptive to the messaging and also have more freedom to make choices.
- In addition to D.A.R.E, CPD shares the District's vision of having all of the SRO integrated into the education process, doing presentations on topics with teachers such as decision-making and consequences.
- **SHS Principal Debra Tarantino** confirmed that the integration of the SROs into the education process is continuing. As examples, as SHS, SRO displayed for parents vaping and other items that have been confiscated from students. Focused on educating parents and showing them what vaping devices look like and where the kids are hiding them. SROs help with social media bullying and harassment, incorporating school rules, when students cross the line.
- **NHS Principal Candace Reim** agreed. She noted that SROs at NHS also have been focusing on safe driving, and present to social studies classes when the topic fits. SROs are involved in school events and are actively creating relationships with students.
- PTA leaders have long advocated for the SRO program to develop in this manner, allowing the expertise that the SROs bring to be shared with students in classrooms, and for the expansion of the DARE program to more students in more grades.

School Media and Threats

- Presentation of startling statistics on the proliferation of school threats via social media since the start of the current school year across the country. (See slides)
- CCSD deals with an increasing number of social media threats as do school districts across the country.
- Majority of social media threats are not credible, but all must be investigated. Strain on school administrators and police.
- CCSD and CPS partners in addressing and assessing threats on social media.
- Re-posting of alleged threats or repost of threats at the by parents and community members meaning to help, exacerbate the problem
- Parents need to educate children on the consequences of sharing on social media, and to think before sending.
- Possible reasons for the increasing in threats via social media: desensitized to violence from media, video games, political environment, mental health concerns, aftereffects of COVID pandemic, lack of awareness of the consequences of posting

- See statistics from NYS Times Sunday Story, Thursday, September 19, 2024, and in other media outlets.

Detective and Public Information Officer. Norm Peters

Parents are aware that inappropriate social media use by students is an issue and want solutions. Det. Peters has presented to parents on the dangers and consequences of social media many times. Det. Peters thanks the PTA for their role in organizing these informative meetings.

CPD is planning meetings for parents this year that will incorporate 3 to 4 schools in one session. PTAs and District administrators asked to help increase attendance at the sessions so parents can receive the important guidance and understand the consequences for their children.

CPD Social Media Sessions:

bring local incidents to light as well as highlight what is on the national landscape
educate parents on reviewing the apps their children are using, the intended purpose and the reality of how it is used.

provide parents with simple explanations of how devices and apps work.

Risks to children who are trusting and don't understand the danger of criminals on the apps and how they use them for access to Credit cards, bank accounts or for predatory purposes.

Mental Health Crisis- Nationally, there is an Increase in anxiety and depression. Children are becoming desensitized to reality.

Marc Baiocco:

We need to find out what is new in terms of the social monitoring systems as well as what are the threats out there. New types of social media concerns continue to arise. For example, Dr. Serra just educated me on BTA. (*New Tik Tok-driven trend among athletes who flog their defeated opponents online in a display dubbed BTA – short for “beat that ass”*). These social media actions lead to unfortunate circumstances with students.

When responding to threats posted online or other such situations, we must be prudent. Each situation poses a varying degree of complexity. We try to get down to the threat, is it real, could it be AI generated, is it a repost of something old or outside our area. We have to weigh these in making decisions, thanks to CPD for helping us get to the bottom of it. CPD assists us with every circumstance. This is not a problem unique to Clarkstown, it is transcending the nation. The proliferation of threats is further exacerbated by adult behaviors in an effort to help.

Maureen Sullivan: When a parent does see something on social media and reports it to the district or the CPD, it does take time to investigate. Each circumstance is different. All factors need to be considered.

How do we create the understanding and realization to parents and the school community to know that we are communicating in the appropriate way. Often the police are the first call.

Decisions about communications

Deb Tarantino - When we receive a report of an online threat at the school-level, we are obligated to investigate. We ask for a copy of the post if it is on social media. Our threat assessment team, psy, social workers, SROs, admin, and guidance counselor of that student meet to examine the facts.

We or the SROs inform CPD that we are investigating the matter. The alleged offender is interviewed including parents and the victim. We have scripted questions (threat assessment tool is in the [District Safety Plan](#)). Students may be in-school suspension room.

With the threat assessment, there is a chart used for responses answered, and the team decides if there is a threat. We inform CPD and central office of our findings. The threat could be as simple as a picture drawn by a student. We must protect the anonymity of all students involved.

Marc Baiocco - We don't make any assumptions about a threat. Threat assessments are very detailed. Assessments do not always include police involvement as response. Sometimes there is a clinical route. The potential threat needs to be mitigated together, and a group determination is made.

We must balance when it is appropriate to communicate to a school, or the district. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws apply. Personal Identifiable Information (PII) all falls within FERPA. We are limited as to what information we can share. There are legal ramifications. We are tasked with conveying the message to the community while protecting the anonymity of students.

Tiffany-Ann Perciballi: When parents approach her with something they see or hear from social media, she directs them to first contact the principal and/or teacher. The level of trust parents feel with the district is increasing. People are getting to know Dr. Baiocco and learning to trust him. She asks parents to have faith in the district and states that trust has to start somewhere. Suggests that the information from the safety committee meetings be shared with parents. People want to see what we are doing to keep the community safe. The more information that parents know, the more they will trust. The PTA has a lot of success getting information out to the community via webinars and online venues.

Jeff Wanamaker: CPD collaboration with the school district is important for the community. The PD and school do not want to create a panic among the community. Some investigation information or details can't be released as the information is investigation sensitive. At the same time, we want parents to know that CPD and the schools are on top of issues that come up in the community. It is important to communicate with the community that issues are being addressed and handled appropriately and everyone is safe.

Maureen Sullivan: These guidelines/limitations are very important to understand. There will often be a gap from when an incident is reported, to when, or if, a communication will be shared with the community. Time is needed for investigation, threat assessment, etc. We don't communicate on every reported threat when proved unfounded. It would be overwhelming.

Marc Baiocco: We are tasked with balancing the want to know and need to know information.. We don't want to send a message out that will stymie an investigation. It requires balance to determine what is best. Most of us would say that social media and cell phones are detrimental in the schools. The BOE and trustees are empowered to create policy. Let's create a policy that works for us. NYS Gov/Hochul is well intentioned on the cell phone ban but doesn't understand our specific school circumstances.

Jeff Wanamaker: Another consideration when considering communications is the role of media. Media outlets are monitoring social media pages, so when someone makes a public post, the CPD is inundated by the press. Then the press puts out information that may not be credible and could be very disruptive to the school community, and cause undue stress and anxiety for parents and students. Once something is on facebook, everyone knows who did it.

John LaNave: Asked the PTA to suggest to anyone reaching out to them about an alleged threat, to call the school principal, Marc Baiocco, Maureen Sullivan or himself, instead of going to facebook for information. People are forwarding and reforwarding messages which perpetuate false information on social media. Clarkstown has one of the greatest police forces in the country, and are recognized for their work in school safety. Our Director of Facilities and Safety Office and Director of Business Services are locked in on safety and security. They are the only two civilians honored and awarded for excellence in safety by the Rockland County PBA. Dr. Baiocco is effective and experienced and demonstrates passion and energy for the protection of life. We have great teachers but they are only with their kids for a portion of the day. Parents are with kids the rest of the time. Parents need to take an active role in this.

Group - Thank you to the Committee Members for the time and commitment to the safety of our students. Please email suggestions or comments to Maureen Sullivan at msullivan@ccsd.edu.

Next meeting will be in March-April.



South High School SRO Tom Rolston at Back to School Night educating parents on the dangers of vaping and sharing the collection of vaping paraphernalia that has been confiscated from students.

See a short video on the dangers of vaping by MD Anderson Cancer Center:

[▶ Dangers of e-cigarettes, vaping and JUULs: How to talk to kids](#)

Attachments:

- Districtwide Safety Committee Presentation, October 17, 2024
- Closson, T and Dewan, S (2024, September 25). As School Threats Proliferate, More Than 700 Students Are Arrested. *The New York Times*.
- Ward, M and Zalaznick, M. (2024, October 10). School safety: Why the human element is so important. *District Administration*.
- Sample Bus Patrol Reports on Stop Arm Camera Violations for CCSD