

**FINAL REPORT OF THE STUDENT AFFAIRS SAFETY AND SECURITY**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE**

**BACKGROUND**

HTSD holds, and has always held, the safety and security of our students, faculty and staff of the utmost importance; the District's fundamental mission is to educate our children while keeping everyone safe every day.

To that end, HTSD has for years continued to evolve and institute essential safety and security measures that address the physical environment and the mental and emotional health of students. The District accomplishes this by working with a collaborative professional team, strengthening partnerships, improving the culture and climate of our schools, researching, planning, implementing proactive measures, providing resources, conducting trainings, practicing and testing, and revising as needed. The District works closely and collaboratively with first responders and seeks out best practices from its neighbors and from national, state and regional organizations.

While many of the specific measures adopted and revised by the District over the years are precluded from public disclosure under the Right to Know Law, the Subcommittee observes that the District's measures taken as a whole are deep, robust, well researched and thought out, tested and revised, and professional. There is always room for improvement. However, the depth and detail of the District's existing measures and commitment to enhancing those measures is substantial and consistently reflects best practices.

**ESTABLISHMENT OF SUBCOMMITTEE**

This past October, the Board became aware that some community members had raised some questions and concerns about the District's safety and security measures. As an initial response, the Board enhanced its outreach to the community. Individual Board members met directly with some parents. Board members also attended with Dr. Loughead PTO meetings on November 12 (Central), November 13 (High School), November 19 (Wyland), November 19 (Poff) and January 7 (HMS). One of the purposes of these listening sessions was to explore the nature and scope of questions and concerns parents had with respect to the District's safety and security measures. Parent comments on the topic of safety and security were mixed in these meetings and conversations. The Board recognized that further direct Board involvement would be desirable to ensure that concerns of the community could be heard, evaluated, and where appropriate, addressed. On the basis of these conversations, the Board formed the Student Affairs Safety and Security Subcommittee to study the matter in depth and help the administration identify and prioritize any enhancements that the Subcommittee believed might positively and materially impact the safety and security of HTSD schools.

**SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITIES AND PROCESS**

As its first action, the Subcommittee reviewed in greater detail the nature and extent of the District's existing measures, protocols, practices and approaches. Our review encompassed

publicly available data, reports and assessments conducted pursuant to the Public School Code, as well as security – sensitive elements that should not and will not be disclosed. As we have said before, the Subcommittee recognized what the District has known for a long time: That school security involves a complex, multi-layered approach that includes provisions for mental health, technology, physical barriers and other features, training, incident protocols and response, and relationships, communication and coordination with Hampton PD and other first responders.

With that context, we then took the following steps over the next several weeks:

- a. Reviewed numerous published studies, data collections, and best practice reviews to best understand the overall school safety environment and incorporated our developed understanding of that environment into what we know about Hampton.
- b. Reviewed the State Police-completed RVAT for each of the District buildings and discussed it with elements of the district safety team with a particular focus on prior and ongoing implementation of lessons it provides.
- c. Traveled to and met with other personnel at multiple other school districts, including superintendents, police chiefs, and board members to assess their security plans and features, as well as the decision-making behind their respective security programs, investments and other initiatives, and those that they did not implement.
- d. Met with the Township Manager and the HTPD chief to discuss the existing security measures and potential enhancements.
- e. Met with the AIU Security Office to discuss HTSD's plans and capabilities, particularly in contrast to the plans of other districts in Allegheny County. This special meeting was in addition to HTSD's weekly participation in an AIU-wide conference call where districts discuss and vet security matters.
- f. Discussed with multiple independent security consultants, including at least one recommended by Hampton community members, the advisability of potentially augmenting security services.
- g. Responded, both in writing and in oral conversations with community members, to substantial amounts of recklessly or intentionally compiled and/or transmitted misinformation concerning the District's practices, security measures, approaches and protocols, as well as those of other school districts.
- h. The Subcommittee met more than a dozen times since February to discuss the information we developed and to evaluate potential recommendations to the Board.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section of the Subcommittee report highlights some of observations and recommendations of the Subcommittee after its review. As noted previously, there are additional observations and recommendations to the Board that the administration and the Subcommittee identify as security-sensitive and which should not be made publicly available. It should also be understood that the Subcommittee recognizes that even highly effective components of a complex safety and security plan can still be imperfect. It is the District's duty and commitment to identify, correct and learn from any process or substantive shortcoming.

It is important for the Board and the community to know that the Subcommittee approached its review and activities with the sole goal of enhancing students' safety. Consequently, the Subcommittee is not making or withholding any recommendations on the basis of cost.

### **Mental health and wellness:**

The District employs multiple proactive approaches to support student mental health and wellness. These include: (1) building-based Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams composed of principals, nurses, counselors, psychologists, teachers, and a dedicated behavioral health liaison from UPMC Western Behavioral Health who review attendance, academic performance, behavioral indicators, and student concerns with the goal of identifying and addressing student needs before concerns escalate; (2) a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework through which all students receive academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports, with increasingly individualized interventions provided as student needs become more complex; (3) access to school-based mental health services through school counselors, school psychologists, nurses, school-based therapists, and community behavioral health partners serving students in every school; (4) anti-harassment/bullying programs, training and reporting systems designed to intervene in cases of bullying and harassment, and (5) partnerships with Allegheny County Department of Human Services, mobile crisis response teams, behavioral health providers, and community agencies that help connect students and families to specialized supports when needed.

While there are provisions of the Public School Code that preclude disclosure of certain safety and security assessments, the conclusions of those independent assessments, including the Act 55 Student Assistance Program, Behavioral Health and School Climate Assessment have confirmed that the District approaches safety and security in a structured, layered approach that is supported by research, across multiple disciplines, including mental health. The District has also implanted systems for prevention, early identification, intervention and partnerships to increase our students' safety. This approach provides an early and consistent flow of important information pertaining to individual cases which fosters early evaluation by professionals and, if necessary, intervention prior to an escalation that impairs the safety and security of the individual and other students.

In its research and review, the Subcommittee observed that the District's approach to mental health and wellness is more cohesive, robust and better staffed than that of many districts in the area.

## **Physical Facilities:**

Publicly-identifiable elements of the District's physical security measures include captured vestibules in each school building, bollards and other physical barriers on each building's exterior, open door alarms, fob-enabled numbered door systems, closed campuses during school hours, and securing of the buildings at night. Significant additional safety features are present but are security-sensitive and cannot be disclosed in this report. Due to a lack of persuasive data supporting the positive impact of metal detectors, and the existence of data indicating several negative effects, the widespread use of metal detectors in school facilities is not recommended at this time.

The Subcommittee confirms that the evolution of the District's physical security measures is an ongoing process. Observations obtained from the District's RVATs, from regular walkthroughs performed by members of the safety and security teams and first responders, and from the assorted and often complex drills and trainings that take place during and outside school hours are evaluated by a multi-disciplinary security team and implemented when and as possible. Larger scale physical enhancements are frequently incorporated into and made a part of the District's capital projects.

The Subcommittee is mindful that the elementary schools are neighborhood buildings. This fact creates strong advantages for families but also raises unique safety and security challenges. Recently, the District closed elementary campuses during school hours and has undertaken to fence off certain playground areas. Additional recent projects at the elementary buildings have been undertaken in whole or in part as a result of the District's ongoing efforts to enhance physical protections. The Subcommittee has identified some additional spaces that should be further protected with physical barriers in the form of fencing.

Subcommittee Recommendation 1: Acquisition and installation of upgrades to perimeter fencing at both Central and Wyland that we believe will improve the closed campus at both schools. At Central expanded fencing will reduce access to our property next to the expanding parking area in Hartwood acres. At Wyland expanded fencing will reduce access to the ball field and walking track adjacent to Walters Rd in the rear of the school.

Subcommittee Recommendation 2: Application of 3M protective film to certain facility windows.

## **Technology/Communication:**

The Subcommittee reviewed District measures and usage of technology including the use of security cameras at all school facilities and the monitoring of those cameras by appropriate district and/or municipal personnel. The Subcommittee studied intra-Building communication features and protocols including the existing walkie talkie system, classroom phone and PA systems and building specific methodologies for accessing first responders. Additional security-sensitive, and thus nonpublic, elements of the District's technology and communication measures were also reviewed by the Subcommittee.

On the basis of the Subcommittee's review and its research with respect to new technologies recently arriving on the market and as adopted by some districts within the county, the

Subcommittee has identified several technological and communication enhancements, one public and several that must remain confidential, that it is recommending to the Board.

Subcommittee Recommendation: Centegix communication system. This system consists of mobile and wearable alert badges for all faculty and staff which will be connected internally to building teams and externally to 911. The system will allow any badge wearer who is aware of an incident or perceives a threat to trigger multiple levels of safety and security response, including a request for staff assistance, building lockdowns and 911 alerts. It is anticipated that the use of the system will dramatically facilitate the communication to necessary internal and external parties of information that is critical to knowing the location and nature of, and desired response to, incidents, and will reduce the ultimate response time of first responders.

The Subcommittee is recommending additional technology, in the form of hardware and software, that will significantly improve the District's and first responders' ability to respond rapidly to any threat. We will not provide further specifics, but please know that the Subcommittee is reviewing recent advances in these areas and the District will continue to seek out and adopt the newest and best practices and methods.

### **Staffing:**

The Subcommittee reviewed safety and security staffing, in particular the responsibilities and functions of the District's school resource officer, the security specialist, and other individuals with responsibilities pertaining to the safety and security of students. HTSD has a marked advantage in this area due to its remarkably close relationship with the Hampton Township Police Department, which jurisdiction matches that of HTSD. This relationship enables strong communication between the District and the Police Department leading to earlier intervention and a more proactive approach.

The Subcommittee spent extensive time studying alternative approaches to security staffing for HTSD. However, none of the experts we interviewed, studies we read, or other districts we visited led us to believe that there is a single best approach to security staffing. Many other districts with higher levels of security staffing had not thoroughly evaluated the need for or impact of the security program. In some cases, staffing approaches resulted from necessity stemming from dysfunctional relationships with local police departments, inefficiencies, confusion and the inability to engage adequately in community policing. Furthermore, increasing the number of armed SROs has no clear positive benefit and many possible negatives.

Additionally, elements of the Subcommittee had conversations with multiple security professionals about the desirability of supplemental security consulting services. These discussions supported the District's view that RVATs represent the gold standard of school facility safety and security assessment. None of the security professionals consulted expressed that any assessments that they might perform on behalf of the District would materially improve upon the observations made in the District's RVATs. Some of those consulted indicated that they had experienced some success in assisting a few districts whose security plans, measures and protocols were not routinely updated and enhanced and where such districts did not enjoy positive relationships with their responding police force(s). They also claimed to have created value where

implementation of security measures and enhancements was disorganized and unevenly led by overextended district administration. The Subcommittee contrasts the circumstances in those districts with HTSD's major differentiator: a dedicated and disciplined collaborative security team that consistently focuses on all aspects of safety and security and the persistent enhancement of existing measures. For that reason, the Subcommittee does not currently recommend the engagement of additional outside security consultants.

The Subcommittee has determined that the District's neighborhood elementary schools and their personnel would benefit from enhanced coordination, oversight, and execution of safety and security operations, together with the establishment of a dedicated liaison among the elementary principals, the School Resource Officer, and the District Safety Coordinator.

Subcommittee Recommendation: Elementary Safety Coordinator rotating through all three elementary buildings. The Elementary Safety Coordinator will be hired over the summer to start in the fall.

### **Coordination; planning; ongoing internal evaluation, and implementation:**

#### Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT)

The District benefits from formal assessments conducted through the Pennsylvania State Police Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team. These reviews are completed by trained officers using PCCD model physical safety standards and include pre-assessment work, on-site and evening reviews, and a final report that is not subject to public disclosure. Each assessment spans multiple days and covers all buildings and key facilities. District leadership participates directly during portions of the assessments and uses interim observations to prioritize follow-up actions before the written RVATs are even received by the District.

#### Training in Place

The District maintains a broad school safety training program that addresses prevention, emergency response, student welfare, and operational readiness. Core examples include ALICE and lockdown training, behaviors of concern and threat assessment team training, and Safe2Say instruction for both staff and students in applicable grades. The program also extends to practical response areas such as evacuation and reunification procedures, medical emergency training, mandated reporter requirements, cybersecurity awareness, and targeted role-based training for administrative and facilities staff.

#### Regular Drills

Regular drills reinforce preparedness across a range of emergency scenarios and help ensure that plans remain familiar and executable. Particularly important examples include fire alarm and lockdown drills, ALICE response exercises, severe weather procedures, bus evacuation drills, and broader student, faculty, and staff evacuation exercises. The Subcommittee observes that the

District's security team implements drills with significant attention to detail in execution which presents frequent opportunities to refine the protocols and processes covered by the drills.

### First Responder Collaboration

The District works closely with first responders on both ongoing prevention efforts and incident planning. This collaboration includes 24/7 Safe2Say coordination, participation in threat assessment teams, joint tabletop exercises and summer active intruder drills, as well as coordinated planning for major events such as football games and graduation. Annual walkthroughs and crisis team planning further support continuous improvement and shared readiness.

### Work with the AIU

The district's work with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, including regular coordination with Aaron Skrbin, provides an important external support structure for school safety planning. This partnership includes weekly communication, on-call consultation, participation in a mutual assistance group, and guidance on issues such as off-site evacuation planning, reunification procedures, tabletop exercises, swatting response, and compliance with PCCD mandates. The relationship also keeps the District informed through briefings from state, federal, regional, and school safety organizations.

### Research

District planning is further informed by a substantial body of research and technical guidance drawn from recognized school safety resources. Particularly significant examples include the PCCD's Model K-12 Threat Assessment Procedures and Guidelines, the National Center for School Safety's communications planning guidance, CISA bomb threat resources, FEMA crisis management materials, active shooter after-action reporting, and the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center's work on threat assessment models. Together with materials shared through the AIU, these resources support evidence-based policy and planning decisions.

### Organizations Consulted

The District monitors guidance and developments from a range of governmental, professional, and local public safety organizations. Key sources include the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, CISA, and PCCD, along with specialized school safety organizations such as Sandy Hook Promise, NASRO/PASRO, ALICE/Navigate 360, and the RVAT team. The District also remains connected to local operational partners, including the AIU, county emergency management, police, EMS, and the fire department, helping ensure that both strategic guidance and local response considerations are incorporated into planning.

### Home Gun Safety

In collaboration with Allegheny County and the HTPD, the District anticipates rolling out a firearm safety awareness in the coming months.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Subcommittee undertook its work hoping to display the same dedication and passion that the District has for years demonstrated when it comes to school safety and security. We believe that we absorbed highly diverse parent and community feedback, corrected erroneous information circulating in the community where possible, fully reviewed existing measures and commenced a robust and detailed review of potential enhancements in an effort to maximize safety within our schools. In our view the recommendations set forth in this report are what is right for Hampton at this time. We, along with the rest of the Board and the District as a whole, remain dedicated to consistent assessment and revision of the District's safety and security measures in the future.

HTSD STUDENT AFFAIRS SAFETY AND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE

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