

**From the School Board
February, 2019**

HSSD Safety Update

“Safety isn’t expensive, it’s priceless”

Author unknown

The tragic school shooting that claimed 17 lives at a high school in Parkland, Florida a year ago prompted mourning, debate, and reflection across the nation. The HSSD Board and district leadership reflected deeply and decided to review our own safety and security policies and protocols. Media coverage of, and subsequent debates after the Parkland incident, unlike past school shootings, illustrated a strong student and parent voice across the nation regarding safety and security in schools.

On August 22, 2018, the District hosted a *Student Safety and School Security Summit* at Lineville Intermediate School. This event was the first of its kind at Howard-Suamico. Board members, district leaders, staff members, parents and students attended. The main objective was to understand our community’s feelings, questions and ideas on safety and security. Since the Summit, much work has taken place. This communication is designed to share what actions have been taken.

After the Parkland High School event, District leadership decided HSSD would take action in two ways. First, leadership ensured that any surplus District financial resources would be earmarked only for staffing investments that helped create a more safe and secure learning environment. To this end, the following positions were added: Bay Port High School Associate Principal, one full-time social worker, one full-time school counselor, two Student Advocates, and a Safety and Security Coordinator. These investments were made before the first day of school in September, 2018.

Second, District leadership initiated a new committee with a diverse team of representatives including students and parents. The team has met seven times thus far. The Safety and Security Committee mission is: ***to foster safe and secure educational environments for all District stakeholders***. The functions of the Committee are to conduct proactive policy and protocol review, recommend investments related to safety and security, and to enhance student, staff, district, community engagement and partnership.

The Safety and Security Committee started this school year by securing over \$528,000 in State Safety Grants. The bulk of the grant funding has been utilized to train all employees in both ALICE (threat response) and Trauma Informed Care (mental wellness). By the end of this year, all employees will be trained in each of the programs. Grant funds were contingent on the District completing school building assessments. The assessments were submitted to the State Office of School Safety and resulted in 12 recommendations on shoring up our building access protocol. At this time, school buildings are testing the recommendations to inform how we can make all schools safer.

The Safety and Security Committee has more work to do. Each month the team is discussing what enhancements are needed to keep improving the learning environment for all. Currently the Committee is working on ways to engage more students, parents, and community partners. Perhaps this is the most important work the Committee is accomplishing, as everyone's voice matters in regard to safety and security. Doing what we can to protect our students, parents, and staff is our most important responsibility.

For more information about the Howard-Suamico School District, please visit our website at www.hssdschools.org or for additional information regarding this article, contact school board member, Garry Sievert at garrsiev@hssdschools.org