



MEDIA RELEASE
Our Work Continues
July 17, 2018
3:15 p.m.

Above all else as we approach the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, we are committed to strengthening and restoring an emotionally healthy and safe learning environment at each of our schools.

Last night, the Santa Fe ISD Board accepted the recommendations of the Santa Fe Strong Safety and Security Committee and approved the donations for the installation and use of metal detectors in Santa Fe ISD schools. They also made no changes to the current student dress code, but instead charged the staff and administration responsible for working with students and their families to consistently enforce the dress code at each of the schools. The input we received from the community was split concerning the use of clear backpacks, and the Board did not vote to change the current policy requiring the use of clear backpacks. To that end, any future consideration for the use of backpacks would be discussed if donated backpacks become available for all students. We know that many of you are preparing for the start of school, and we do not want to add any financial burden to purchase backpacks.

We know that the use of metal detectors and enforcement of the dress code are only a part of the overall Safety and Security Plan for our schools, and we sincerely thank those who continue to serve on the Santa Fe Strong Safety and Security Committee to address community priorities to keep our schools safe. The committee members have been meeting and discussing detailed research findings and best practices to finalize priorities and recommendations regarding Hardening of the Schools and Policy Changes to bring to the Board of Trustees for implementation at all schools before the start of the 2018-19 school year. In addition to finalizing these recommendations, the committee is also discussing Mental Health and Wellness Support Services. At this time, the Santa Fe Strong Safety and Security Committee is working in subcommittees to bring forward additional recommendations for remaining priority issues and concerns.

To date, the following Safety and Security life-safety priorities will be in place for the 2018-19 school year. The priorities include: **Hardening the Schools, Policy Changes** (training, communication), and **Mental Health and Wellness Support Services**.

Hardening the Schools

- Increasing the Santa Fe ISD Police Department to full-time staff to 14 officers, 10 part-time officers, and five campus security assistants for the 2018-19 school year. The changes include:

- Adding security in all schools with the additional Santa Fe ISD Police Department police officers and campus security assistants who will be providing increased security monitoring in hallways, door entries and student supervision.
- Purchasing new security equipment to fully equip all new officers with items that include: weapons, vehicles, safety vests, radios, Taser guns, etc.
- Redesigning and modifying the High School: Options have been approved for reconstruction and renovation of the affected areas of the high school.
- Providing comprehensive Training for SFISD Police Officers: All SFISD police officers receive ongoing ALERRT Level One and Two training; fire arms training; secure weapon and rifle training; participate in drills with all campuses and provide training on District crisis management to all staff.
- Providing Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) training for the public: SFISD police officers provide CRASE training for the public, which is designed and built on the Avoid, Deny, Defend (ADD) strategy developed by ALERRT in 2004. CRASE training provides strategies, guidance and a proven plan for surviving an active shooter event.
- Improving student supervision and training: Organized student supervision is one of the most reliable ways to prevent accidents and injuries. Improved student supervision reduces the risks of incidents on playgrounds, pedestrian and vehicle accidents, medical emergencies, or acts of violence. Effective student supervision and training also reduces a major crisis. Our Santa Fe ISD Police Department trains all its staff and students in safety procedures in major crisis events such as an active shooter incident, fire or tornado.
- Securing access to schools: Secured entrances on all campuses and within all departments ensures that visitors must check in with a receptionist and show proof of identity. They are then processed through the Raptor school security system before they gain entrance for meetings, campus visits, etc. Changing door locks and reconfiguring alarm systems: The current door locks are being changed and the alarm system reconfigured to include panic buttons.
- Implementing exterior electronic door-locking alarm notification systems at all schools.
- Providing additional perimeter fencing at elementary schools.
- Increasing participation in and visibility of the SFISD Police Department Parent on Patrol Squad (POPS) program. POPS is a volunteer program designed to involve parents, grandparents and other relatives, to volunteer their time to assist school district police officers on their respective SFISD campuses.

Policy Changes (training, communication)

- Continuously enforcing all safety protocols for routine school operations, including dress code and requiring students and staff to wear identification badges while on campus at all times and visitors to wear a school or District form of identification while on campus.
- Providing routine and ongoing staff training and school audits to include a review of compliance with our student code of conduct and discipline policies.
- Improving District Communications and Emergency Management Protocols for the 2018-19 school year by implementing SMS text for additional emergency safety communications to the the School Messenger and Skyward notification services, used by

the nation's leading school systems to connect with parents, students and staff with features that also include: voice, email and social media.

- Providing video coverage following each of our Board Meetings.
- Providing a new District Emergency Management Protocols tab on the Emergency Safety Information webpage to provide emergency safety communications protocols. Previously, there was only a School Closing Procedures tab, due to inclement weather or hazardous driving conditions. The Emergency Safety Information icon is located on the right toolbar on the SFISD homepage.
- Requiring all Santa Fe ISD employees and substitutes to complete the Safe Schools training system for all federal, state and local mandated employee compliance training before school starts. The sessions in this training include: Active Shooter, Bullying Recognition and Response, Crisis Response and Recovery, and others. Training is available in both English and Spanish for all employees.
- Providing the Stop the Bleed safety training and resources to teachers, coaches and nurses in our schools this summer. Stop the Bleed is a Homeland Security national awareness campaign intended to cultivate grassroots efforts that encourage bystanders to become trained, equipped, and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives.
- Review and implement the use of social media monitoring software for situational awareness and safety purposes.
- Provide an anonymous tips hotline for students to report suspected illegal activities or concerns that involve our schools.
- Implementing a Safety and Security Awareness Communication plan to share safety reminders and the intentional safety focus as part of the day-to-day operations and culture of SFISD schools. The plan is dynamic and updates and improvements will be made to the plan throughout the school year according to the needs of SFISD students, staff and parents.
- Continue to regularly publish news releases, superintendent messages and announcements that are shared in a variety of ways to include staff communications, School Messenger parent messages, the Santa Fe ISD website, Santa Fe Interactive Web Portal (www.santafeupdates.com) and on social channels (2,867 Twitter followers and more than 7,434 Facebook users). The social media channels provide the District an opportunity to share fresh content in an easily-sharable format that includes photos and videos. The Interactive Web Portal provides an opportunity for parents and community members to provide feedback and ask Santa Fe ISD questions at their own convenience.

Mental Health and Wellness Support Services.

- Adding four new counselors: As a result of a state grant, SFISD is adding additional counselors to the high school staff in order to focus on behavioral and mental health concerns. School counselors should have more time to devote to the mental health needs of students. In addition to academic counseling, there is a need to ensure counselors are trained to and available to focus on behavioral and mental health issues.

- Coordinating Mental Health Responses' efforts intended to support and encourage the transformation of the May 18, 2018 traumatic experience into a process of rebuilding for the individuals, families, school district, and the Santa Fe community.
- Opening the Santa Fe Strong Resiliency Center, a partnership of the City of Santa Fe, the Gulf Coast Center, the Texas Children's Trauma and Grief Center and others in the Santa Fe community, to provide mental health services to those impacted by the events of May 18 at no cost to those who take advantage of the services.

What's ahead?

Please look for a Santa Fe ISD district-wide safety information meeting notice for parents planned for early August. More detailed information will follow.

The safety and security of our students and staff is our highest priority. Our work continues and will require ongoing community-wide support, as well as patience and cooperation from families and staff as we implement these safety measures. We encourage our parents and families to take the extra time this summer to rest, relax and recover.

We also want to remind you about the availability of the **Resiliency Center** and the resources provided for our community. The Resiliency Center serves as a free long-term resource for healing the Santa Fe community. The Center's caring professionals provide a safe and supportive healing environment dedicated to everyone affected by the incident. As a referral hub, the Center works with partner agencies that provide spiritual care referrals, training, advocacy, legal aid, equine therapy, recreational therapy, and more. The Resiliency Center is open daily, and for more information, contact the center directly at 409-218-7129 or email cgaylord@ci.santa-fe.tx.us.

I am very proud to be able to serve this caring community. Thank you for your continued support for our students and staff.

Together we are Santa Fe Strong!

Dr. Leigh Wall
Superintendent of Schools
Santa Fe ISD