



Q&A: School Safety

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What steps have Plainfield Schools taken to improve security?

- First and foremost, know that from the Superintendent, to the School Board, to every employee in our schools and on our buses: our first and most important duty is to provide a safe, secure environment for students.
- During school hours, doors are locked except for the time when students are entering in the morning. Even then, only specific doors are unlocked and teachers or staff are monitoring the entrances.
- Following the morning bells, doors are automatically locked, and then those entrances are checked throughout the day.
- In partnership with the Plainfield Police Department, we have School Resource Officers located at Plainfield High School and the Plainfield Community Middle School. Two police officer are devoted to the elementary "campuses:" Brentwood and Clarks Creek on the east side of town, and Central and Van Buren on the west side of town. In addition, we have a former school administrator who will be based at Van Buren Elementary this year as they go through a renovation.
- Every school is equipped with a panic alarm that rings through to the County Emergency Communications Dispatch Center.
- Plainfield Schools work closely with local law enforcement agencies, including the airport-based Transportation Safety Administration. Together we conduct unannounced dog searches periodically, but we can also request searches any time we feel it might be prudent.

What sort of drills do students practice, and how often do they occur?

- Every school must conduct monthly fire drills. In addition, we hold seasonal tornado drills, an annual earthquake drill in conjunction with The Great American Shakeout, and lockout/lockdown drills take place at least four times each school year.

- Drills typically occur without warning, especially once the school year is well underway. Given recent events, principals may choose to announce that a drill will take place that day. It's important for students to learn to respond quickly and confidently when drills take place, but making them anxious in the process will be avoided, when possible.
- Signs are posted in every classroom, hallway and public space with instructions for how to respond and where to go during lockdown/lockdown drills.
- All staff, including substitute teachers, are trained annually on our safety protocol.

As a parent, I would like to know more about how you manage school safety.

- At the beginning of each school year, every principal holds a meeting to discuss school safety. Sadly, attendance at these meetings is usually quite small; one school, this past August, only had one parent attend.
- We can appreciate the many demands on family time, so we understand that when things are busy and the world isn't focused on school safety, attending an evening safety meeting for 30 minutes seems unnecessary. We've considered videotaping the meetings, but for security reasons, we don't feel that's the right answer. How could we better provide this information to you as parents?
- All Plainfield schools have a buzz-in system. In all schools except Van Buren (and this is being changed over the next few months), once you are buzzed into the office, there is another set of locked doors before gaining access to the school itself. This double-secure system is considered an important deterrent to individuals looking to gain access to schools.
- Every school has security cameras that total roughly 600 across the school corporation. These cameras are located both inside and outside schools, and on our buses.
- Every school is equipped with two-way radios for within their building, and in addition to that, principals and Central Office administrators have the ability to talk on a private channel when necessary.
- We employ off-duty officers at many of our middle and high school events. These officers work side-by-side with the Student Resource Officer for that school, to ensure the safety of everyone attending the events.
- In addition to the two officers assigned to PHS and PCMS, assistant principals from PHS, PCMS and Clarks Creek have been certified as School Safety Specialists. Part of their certification requires annual training.
- We work closely with several law enforcement agencies, and our schools are frequently used for first responders to train and practice drills. While this

is an obvious benefit to the first responders, their familiarity with our schools is a secondary benefit.

- PCSC hosts a meeting each summer with local police and fire leaders to prepare for the school year, and to discuss issues, concerns and trends.
- Anyone visiting the school must provide a photo ID, which is scanned into a database which performs an immediate background check and generates a photo stick-on badge that must be worn while in the building that day. Every employee is required to wear their ID badge.
- In order to volunteer in a classroom or chaperone a school event, every individual must submit to a background check.
- By law, every school employee must go through a background check every five years.
- Many students come to us with tremendous burdens and challenges. Having the social and emotional resources and expertise at school is a vital tool to help students deal with the many things going on in their lives, even outside of school. Helping students safely navigate life's challenges can often diffuse what could grow into a dangerous situation, and we are committed to providing that expertise.
- Over the last several years, we have increased the number of counselors in our schools. Our goal is that every school be staffed with at least one licensed counselor, and this will be accomplished in the very near future. At the middle and high schools, and two of the elementary schools, this is already in place, and beginning in July 2018, Clarks Creek will have two counselors on staff.
- Our school administrators monitor social media using software that flags key terms and phrases. This helps identify students in crisis and allows us to provide assistance in a timely manner.
- Some people have asked why we aren't using metal detectors. With all of the discussion surrounding school safety, and so many ideas and suggestions being offered, we are following the recommendations of law enforcement and security experts.

I've instructed my child to run outside if there is an active shooter.

- There are many reasons why we do not support that approach.
 - Your child's teacher is responsible for your child when they are in school. If they run outside, we can no longer protect them or keep track of their whereabouts.
 - If students run outside, safety officials can't tell the difference between innocent students/staff and the person of interest.
 - If shots are being fired, there is a greater likelihood of being injured while trying to get away than when hidden in a locked classroom.

- In active shooter scenarios, we wouldn't know if there is one, or more than one, shooter. There could be shooters outside waiting for people to run out of the building.
- Should there be an active shooter and students are outside, they will be instructed to hide in the nearest safe place, which could be outdoors.

There are so many rumors and concerns over school safety. How do I know what to believe?

- While social media can be fun, entertaining and even a great communications tool, it can also be our worst enemy. Social media is not the place to discuss school safety or incidents that may or may not have happened at school. You are always welcome to contact your child's principal for information, but realize they often cannot discuss the details of discipline or security situations with you.
- This would be a great time to have a conversation with your children about the seriousness of making threats or spreading rumors. Remember, children are like sponges in that they listen and observe and absorb everything around them, and often they act on what they hear or observe. If adults are making threats, even when they have no intention of seeing them through, that sends a confusing message to children.
- Please remember, and remind your children of this every opportunity you get: if you see something, say something. Our teachers, principals, and counselors are here to help and will be certain that any concerns are shared with the proper authorities.

Will you allow school employees (who have carry permits) to bring their weapons to school?

- No. There are many reasons why, but most important of them is that our staff's responsibility is to protect and instruct students. We believe the use of weapons, especially in highly volatile and emotional situations, should be left up to law enforcement professionals.

Ultimately, it may be very difficult to prevent someone who is determined to carry out a mass shooting, in a school, church, movie theater or anywhere. But we will do everything within our power to ensure that our schools have put into place all of the protections possible, and that students and staff regularly practice the drills that will help protect them if ever faced with that scenario.

We live in a wonderful community. Working together and being attentive to our surroundings is one of the best strategies to providing a safe school environment, and we appreciate your support in the effort.