

**AMHERST COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
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**Safety and Security in Amherst County Public Schools**

**Superintendent's Statement**

Lately in the national news, we are informed of events where individuals have tried to “attack” schools to commit harm to children. The Amherst County Public Schools (ACPS) have reviewed again school division Crisis Plans, and other procedures affecting student/ staff safety and security. Following are points of information in this regard:

- All schools have a Crisis Plan in place that addresses procedures to be followed in the event of a serious breach of the peace. These plans are specific to an individual school, and are vetted by the division's Safety Committee and local public safety agencies. Each Crisis Plan is reviewed and revised annually to reflect the latest information/ recommendations from these public service agencies. School-based coordination of efforts as well as an assessment of success are assigned to the Crisis Team (each school is required to have a functioning Crisis Team made up of school leadership, key staff, and School Resource Officer). All state and local police agencies, as well as Emergency Services, have current print and digitized copies of the individual Crisis Plans.
- All schools are required to hold active shooter lock down drills as well as training with students to address issues of following directions, being observant, etc. Procedures within the school require teachers to monitor students, and maintain information as to the whereabouts of students in their care at all times. Student Emergency Care Cards (this card provides contact information and other material that may be needed in an emergency) are reprinted and made available to staff to insure information is in multiple spots for added security in an emergency.
- No one is permitted to remove any child from school without (1) being listed as an appropriate individual (parent, grandparent, selected neighbors, etc. -- all as identified by the parent in advance on the care card) who is authorized to pick up the child, and (2) providing for inspection a current photo ID (this applies even if the individual is “known” by school staff).
- All schools hold drills in which a full school evacuation is conducted. All schools have an identified off-site facility where students, under proper direction, are moved in case of an evacuation order. Students/ staff are removed quickly from the building (even planning/ drill addresses the evacuation of handicapped individuals) following a silent protocol with hands on their heads (as directed by local public service agencies).
- All schools have camera/ entry buzzer access to school buildings. All exterior doors remain locked, any outside individual must be badged, and numerous radios are scattered

throughout each building for access to an administrator. Students and staff are encouraged to stop and seek identification of all those without a badge. All classrooms have phone access to the Main Office. Each school is served by a School Resource Office, provided by the Amherst County Sheriff's Office.

- Administrative staff is trained in measures related to school safety/ security. All schools are fully equipped with video cameras that can be accessed on Main Office screens in real-time.
- Bus drivers have undergone training for safety procedures as well. Each driver is also tasked with being observant of areas around schools, and to utilize their on-bus radios to send a pre-determined coded message to the Transportation Office that would generate immediate calls to the police as well as the Central Office.
- All threats to the peace within a school facility are fully coordinated with local public safety agencies. Once involved, the Sheriff's Office takes control of the facility/ site.
- A specialized alert computer program, which was developed in house by the ACPS Technology Office, and placed on all adult controlled computers, allows for immediate notifications of a situation. This alert button, now on the toolbar of all adult-controlled computers, allows for the adult to send a pre-programmed, silent alert message to all adult computers within the building. This alert generates an immediate lock down situation until the matter can be resolved.
- Students throughout the division are never left in a situation where they are without supervision. Additionally, students are trained as to what to do should they be outside the classroom when a lock down is announced. Professional Development for all employees is provided in this regard to be certain they understand procedures so they may better protect the children.
- Each day, the principal conducts a perimeter walk of the school to insure there is an awareness to any activity/ changes to the area immediate to the school. Any unusual activity or situation is reported to local police and the Central Office.
- Under guidance from the Commonwealth of Virginia, students/ staff are trained in procedures to be followed during a hurricane drill situation.
- The Central Office which houses the Superintendent and top level staff is being trained in procedures for lock down. The Central Office also maintains a Crisis Plan as well as participation in all Professional Development, drills, and training.
- When parents are to be notified, the school division will utilize every avenue at its disposal. The Message Alert system that uses phone and text, the division's web site, and local media would all be used. The ultimate aim is to keep all students/ staff safe at all times, and the families of these individuals informed.

Student/ staff safety and security remain a constant concern. These steps, as outlined above with others considered confidential, are in place to promote that safe environment. It is not perfect as schools can still be attacked, but ACPS has taken concrete steps to protect "our kids."



Dr. Steven Nichols  
Superintendent