



Parents, Friends, and members of our Northwestern Community,

The Northwestern School District appreciates the concern, love, and show of support for our administration, staff, and children exhibited by parents and community members. The safety of our children is paramount with the pervasive schools violence and threats across the area, state, and nation.

Below is a summary of current safety precautions that we have in place here at Northwestern. In addition, we have had MARCs emergency radios for a few years now, we have 99 campus security cameras, three cameras on each of our buses, and we are discussing and initiating several other new additional precautions.

Blessings to each of you and thanks for your prayers, faith, and your support for everyone protecting our children. Know that we have an exceptional faculty, staff, and administrative team here at Northwestern who are dedicated to the learning, development, and safety of children in our care.

A recent excellent parent suggestion was made for parents to talk with their children about remaining aware of situations, bullying, or troubled students and to please remind children to share these concerns and situations with school adults and their parents. I echo this and also remind parents to monitor your children's electronic devices and social media as well – and to be aware of conversations they are having and with whom.

Another excellent recent community member suggestion was made for additional peer supports through a possible training program in order for adults to have a greater awareness of social media concerns. The district is moving forward with this suggestion in partnership with ANAZAO.

Please know that we are and will continue doing everything in our power to provide a safe and secure learning environment for our children.

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### **Summary of Current Safety Measures**

Northwestern's buildings remain secured during the school day. What we have in place has not changed dramatically, but have become more detailed, evolved over time, and responses have become more rehearsed.

We pray that no such cowardly and inhumane violent acts such as what has occurred in Florida toward children occur in our community.

We also pray that we have the strength of relationships and awareness of our own children and our environment to recognize, intercede, and support individual students in crisis so we can stop any potential self-harm as well.

As far as school building and district-wide security, we have layers of security that include:

- Locked doors and windows.
- Numerous security cameras outside our buildings as well as inside our buildings.
- Security cameras at the main entrance linked to a buzzer system whereby the doors are remote unlocked to allow access.
- Name tags and protocol for visitors and child pick-up.

- Alice Training. Awareness and training are vitally important.
- Regular armed intruder drills.
- We have trained response crisis teams in each building with personnel who have had and annually undergo restraint training.
- We have more comprehensive building and district safety plans that are updated annually.
- We have sought Title XX Grant dollars to fund Catholic Charities and ANAZAO clinical, individual, and group counseling in our schools.
- Added exterior lock boxes with master keys for law enforcement access.
- We worked with law enforcement to mark exterior doors and mark classrooms from the outside.
- MARCs Emergency Radios that link directly with the Wayne County Sheriff's Department and Local Fire Departments.
- Wayne County Sheriff Deputies regularly patrol around the school campus and stop in at varied times.
- We have also approved specific and trained law enforcement officers to carry concealed and unconcealed weapons on campus and inside buildings. Only board members and administrators are in the know of whom these individuals are. Their identities are kept under wraps for obvious reasons.
- Obviously on duty law enforcement officers can also carry their weapons.
- Since the Florida shooting area law enforcement has stepped-up their school presence.
- We have long-standing religious education programs and support prayer groups.

As always, the very best deterrent in many situations is forging and maintaining strong relationships and communications with staff, students, and parents; addressing mental health and behavioral issues, dealing with any bullying behavior immediately, as well as providing additional counseling supports for students and families as provided with existing staff, Catholic Charities, ANAZAO, families, and local clergy. Northwestern is blessed with a strong culture of faith in a very student-centered, nurturing environment. **I appreciate the awareness and relationships we have of individual students and their needs – through our guidance counselors, extended counseling supports, administrators, staff-members, and community-wide.**

**We have been discussing security further and we are pursuing the additional measures below:**

- Purchased pepper spray gel for offices personnel, administration, and other key personnel.
- We are putting together training for additional peer training program provided by ANAZAO for recent graduates (they can become like big brothers and big sisters in this program and stay in tune with student concerns, social media, etc.).
- The Elementary began a High School to Elementary Peer Support program earlier this year.
- Adding additional cameras in a few problem areas. Note that our security cameras feed into the offices and can be viewed on various electronic devices – including cell phone for approved school officials and law enforcement.
- Researching the costs of adding an additional MARCs radio to the district office and 4 mobile MARCs radios. (we have 1 base unit in each school building currently, but adding one in the district office would be a plus as would having several Marcs mobile units). We are working to find grant funding for these.
- Educate/remind staff on the locations of fire extinguishers and other potential defensive items are located throughout their building.
- Researching software to potentially scan social media for key phrases, threats, and self-harm.
- Staff will be undergoing more comprehensive self-defense training in mid-April (we have had crisis teams in place with some training as well as ALICE Training for all new employees and refreshers for current employees)
- Expanded access of our security cameras to Sheriff Dept. Deputies on their electronic devices.
- Purchasing additional direct intercom phones to reach the entire building in emergency.
- Add a second inside door lock to classroom doors.
- Glass breakers in every classroom (so teachers can break windows and escape through them if pinned down and if needed).

- Multi-directional signal booster for the MARCs radios. These are a lot of money and we would need to have grant dollars to purchase.
- We are searching for school safety, opioid, or DARE officer funds, if we can qualify for grant money.

**Other items we are discussing that have come through administrator/staff/community/parent suggestions include:**

- Employ a Resource Officer who is committed to regular training with our Sheriff's Dept. or other emergency response trainer.
- Pursue additional funding for school safety that might include dollars for a resource officer.
- Adding 3M glass coating to the glass at building entrances.
- Adding alarms to some of the exits that are not the main building exits. Door alarms to all sub-entrances that can be visually seen by the office as well.
- Add a gate to the area behind the high school to be closed/locked during school hours.

**These items are unlikely, but are being discussed:**

- Arming secretaries with Tasers.
- Authorize a few select administrators and/or other key personnel with CCW and additional extensive training – Principals, Asst. Principals, and Superintendent, and few others – to keep a weapon secured in a steel lock box in case of necessity.
- Metal Detectors in main entrances (with the additional cost of someone to monitor them).
- Body scan device at the main entrance of each building (\$12,000 each device and someone would need to monitor them).
- 5 gallon buckets of stones in classrooms to throw at an intruder.
- The district has concerns with arming general teachers or staff, but has been part of the discussions as well.