

Northwestern School Safety & Security Survey Results

353 community respondents

217 of respondents have children in the one or more of the schools

136 of these respondents are also employees

We also had several anonymous student responses, as we promoted to high school students.

More than 50% of respondents feel very confident or confident that appropriate safety measures have or are being implemented in Northwestern Schools.

More than 78% of respondents feel that employing a full-time resource officer at Northwestern Schools would improve safety in our schools.

82% of respondents would be in favor of the district employing a full-time resource officer.

74% of respondents would support a school levy or other funding mechanism supporting the ongoing employment and training costs of employing a resource officer.

49% of respondents feel very confident or confident that approving a select 2-3 trained individuals maintaining a locked weapon in each building would improve safety. Roughly 76% are very confident, confident, or somewhat confident that this would improve safety. However, the results seem polarized, with strong comments pro and con regarding this. Comments ranged from: "the district should arm any interested employee with a CCW" to "arming only a select few with ongoing emergency response weapon training and mental health background checks" to "opposition to any weapons in schools beyond law enforcement personnel", and even "I will withdraw my children if this is allowed".

54% of respondents feel very confident or confident in supporting allowing school personnel to carry weapons in the schools. More than 77% felt very supportive, supportive, or somewhat supportive. This indicates strong trust with school employees.

58% are very supportive or supportive of employees carrying a concealed weapon outside of the school day at extracurricular events on campus.

Recent instances of violence in schools and threats made in our own schools has brought a renewed awareness and fear for school safety locally. Northwestern staff, administrators, and Board Members have been discussing safety and security ongoing manner of late. We thought it wise to not only post a list of current safety precautions, new security items we were moving forward on, but also brainstormed ideas to consider. We also invited community to share perceptions and suggestions at a March 19th Community Meeting on School Safety & Security where roughly 60 community members met with administrators and board members and I to discuss this relevant and very appropriate topic.

Any member of our community desiring to share additional thoughts and ideas we welcome your input - do so through e-mail, phone call, or stop by the superintendent's office or principal's office to discuss.

The district is pursuing safe and Drug Free matching grant dollars to help defray at least the initial cost of employing a resource officer, if we do indeed pursue this. If the district goes in this direction we will also:

- search for other potential grant funds to help with the cost

- pursue potential partnerships (possibly with the Wayne County Sheriff's Dept., a local police Department, or other collaboration for times when school is not in session – such as summers, fair, and Christmas holidays)
- include additional responsibilities (such as helping principals monitor social media, assisting with our current drug and alcohol testing, DARE responsibilities, building relationships with students, covering extracurricular events, etc.)

The big three items thus far that are new include:

- The district will be adding to our existing 99 security cameras – mainly at the main entrances and secondary exits of the buildings.
- The district has provided Pepper Gel to administrators, secretaries, custodians, and other key personnel.
- We are studying and discussing the feasibility of employing a resource officer and when this might be possible.

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. The \$41,000 grant we have received for these counseling agencies to work with our students most in need in all of our school buildings through Wayne County JFS through Title XX funds as approved by the Wayne County Commissioners has been a much needed additional support for our children each of the past 3 years.

The latest list of current safety precautions, new security items, and brainstormed possible ideas to consider are listed on the district website. We also included the current list in tis newsletter. This will be updated as we move forward.

The complete survey results (complete with graphs) are available on the Northwestern website for all to view (minus the actual individual comments, which number in the hundreds and are being reviewed by Administration and the Board of Education for consideration).

I would like to thank our staff, parents, community members, students, administration, and our Northwestern Board of Education for the collaborative discussion that has taken place in regards to school safety and security. Together we will help make our students even more safe and secure.

Jeffrey N. Layton
Northwestern Superintendent of Schools