

Madison Metropolitan School District School Safety Practices and Strategies

The goal of the Madison Metropolitan School District is to provide a safe, respectful and welcoming learning environment for staff and students. It is our belief that the safest schools are those that foster a climate of support and respect and that instill a sense of community among its students, families and staff. Building security, incident response, threat assessment and motivation reduction are additional components of this effort. The district's foundation for maintaining safe schools is addressed in the following strategies:

Engagement of Students and Development of Trusting and Supportive Relationships

Students are the key to safe schools. The building of positive relationships between staff and students is critical in order to develop school spirit and cooperation, and to maintain open lines of communication. The district strives to engage all students in positive school activities and to identify and address behavioral issues before they reach a crisis point. All staff members are involved.

Building a Sense of Community in Each School

The creation of a safe school requires participation of the entire school community. Safe neighborhoods and communities can only be created through the involvement of its members. Families, administrators, teachers and students are the foundation of the school community and all have a role to play in this effort.

Staff Training

Training is provided to staff on an on-going basis and on a wide-range of topics such as: bullying, protective behaviors, classroom management, crisis intervention, violence risk assessment, physical support and gang intervention. All staff members are required to participate in fire, tornado and "Code Red" drills. MMSD's School Security Assistants receive advanced training on crisis management, conflict resolution and CPR.

Crisis Management and Intervention

Nearly two thousand staff members have been certified in a two-day Crisis management and Intervention (CMI) course developed specifically for MMSD by the University of Wisconsin's Waisman Center Community TIES Program. The course provides training on supporting all students and in managing challenging behaviors. The program provides skills on identifying the stages of behavior escalation and is paired with positive action plans for use by educators and school teams.

Reaction to Community Incidents

Student conflicts that occur outside school, in the neighborhood, at the mall, or on public transportation have the potential to continue in our schools. To minimize this risk, it's critical for staff to be attentive to community incidents that involve students. These incidents are identified and resolved before they affect our schools and jeopardize the safety of students. Schools accomplish this by maintaining open lines of communication with students, families and neighborhood agencies. Threat analysis, mediation, counseling or referral to law enforcement may be utilized.

Collaboration and Communication with Police, Courts and Community Agencies

Schools are part of the larger community and strive to work and collaborate with other agencies to the extent allowed by law. The goal is to establish good working relationships and to exchange critical information to maintain student and school safety. The district encourages on-going dialogue with outside agencies, as well as collaborative efforts to address community issues that may impact its students.

Court Notices to Schools

Courts notify MMSD when K-12 students are charged with crimes. Regardless of where the crime was committed, if an MMSD student is involved, the court is required to notify our district of the charge and of its resolution. These notices are utilized to inform principals of the court action, to assess any additional risk and if necessary to develop safety plans to support and ensure the safety of our students.

Utilize a Problem Solving Approach to Identify Patterns or Clusters of Incidents

School responses to safety concerns must be effective and long-term. The use of data to identify clusters of incidents, patterns of behavior and root causes of problems are critical. All schools are responsible for developing information-gathering systems that enable the tracking and identification of incidents that impact students or staff safety.

Incident Management

When a significant safety incident occurs in a school, the District Administrative Team provides support to the principal with the management of the event. The team consists of the Grade Level Superintendent, the Safety/Security Coordinator, the Director of Media Relations, and the Building Services Director. The team assists to stabilize the incident, provides logistic and communications support and coordinates all emergency and security operations with the police, fire departments and other emergency personnel. The district utilizes established federal Incident Command System (ICS) protocols for incident management.

Incident Debriefings

The school district strives to continuously improve the safety of its schools by conducting critical debriefings of all major incidents. The debriefings are intended to analyze the event, to identify lessons learned, to determine how and why it happened, how it could have been prevented, how the effects could have been mitigated, and how efforts to respond and to recover from the incident could be improved. Factors reviewed include: Triggering incidents, decision making process, staff response time, ability to isolate and contain, immediate actions taken to ensure school safety, use of equipment and execution of emergency procedures.

Use of MMSD's Violence Risk Assessment and other Analytical Tools to Support Students in Crisis

Staff is trained to utilize MMSD's Violence Risk Assessment (VRA). This is an effective tool for gathering information related to threats or student behaviors that pose a risk to others. The analysis may indicate the need for additional support for the student or for the implementation of safety plans which may involve consultation with law enforcement. The VRA is conducted by the principal in conjunction with a support team of psychologists, school social workers and other key staff members.

Employment of Educational Resource Officers

The district contracts with the Madison Police Department for the placement of an Educational Resource Officer (ERO) in each of our high schools. The specific duties, roles and responsibilities of the officers are addressed in a formal contract negotiated with the department every two years. The district and the police department are committed to providing a balanced approach to the ERO's responsibilities in the schools which reflect their educational role, as well as their law enforcement role. The officers provide a consistent police presence in the schools which enables them to develop positive relationships with students and staff and to work pro-actively to prevent incidents. The officers' work is by and large of a preventative nature and in support of the schools' overall efforts to maintain a safe environment.

Employment of School Security Assistants

The district employs a staff of 30 uniformed School Security Assistants (SSA's) whose primary function is to provide for the safety of our high schools and nine designated middle schools. Working under the day to day leadership of the school principals, the SSA's provide direct support to students and staff. The SSA's are CPR trained and receive extensive training on student engagement, conflict resolution and crisis management.

Utilize MMSD Emergency Procedures in All Schools

Emergency plans and procedures are standardized throughout the district. These plans contain specific procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. All staff is trained on the procedures and is required to participate in school-wide drills to familiarize themselves with the nature of emergency response.

Traffic Safety

The district recognizes the importance of student safety to and from school. To this end, the district participates in a joint effort with the Madison Police Department, Traffic Engineering and parent/teacher organizations to address vehicle traffic and pedestrian issues. The School/Traffic Safety Committee meets regularly to address specific concerns and to review significant traffic accidents involving students or staff. Recommendations for improvement may involve the designation of safe routes for students, changes to school parking lots, alteration of school bus or parent drop-off and pick-up points, use of additional police resources or street redesigns.

Classes on Personal Safety (COPS)

The Madison Police Department's Safety Education Unit teaches a curriculum aimed at 4th and 5th graders. The Safety Education Unit consists of four officers who work closely with teachers to provide information and skills to students on Life Choices and Self-Esteem, Bullying, Protective Behaviors, Internet Safety, Alcohol, Tobacco, Marijuana, and Gangs. The officers teach in each classroom for one hour each week for approximately 10 weeks, or one full semester. The program has been successful in preparing students for middle schools and in building trust with the police. Many social emotional learning skills, as well as protective behaviors concepts are interwoven in the curriculum.

Technology

To enhance our schools' ability to prevent or respond to incidents in the most efficient manner, the district utilizes resources such as radios and repeater systems, classroom telephones, public address systems and video surveillance cameras. The use of the cameras is guided by Board of Education policy. In special circumstances and with approval of the school principal, metal detectors may be utilized.

Safe Buildings

All elementary and middle schools are equipped with electronic systems that lock the buildings shortly after the start of the day. The systems include a camera and intercom which allow visitors to communicate with the school secretary. High school entrances have been remodeled with Welcome Centers which provide similar security measures in a larger setting. All buildings are equipped with public address systems, fire alarms and smoke detectors, and AED's.

Gang Prevention

The district recognizes that gangs exist in our community and that some gang-involved youth may attend our schools. Therefore, to minimize gang activity, the district has specific rules that prohibit gang or anti-social behaviors and the use of gang symbols in school. The district is committed to the academic achievement of all students, regardless of gang affiliation. However, gang recruitment or attempts to intimidate students is not tolerated. Schools may use the most appropriate response to address gang behavior, these include: Counseling, working with families, enforcement of MMSD's Code of Conduct, referral to other agencies, or enforcement action by law enforcement.

Use of K9 Teams to Conduct Drug Sweeps in Secondary Schools

In an on-going effort to maintain safe and drug-free schools, the district collaborates with the Madison Police Department for the use of specially trained K9 teams to check for illegal drugs and/or weapons in common areas of our high school buildings, such as hallways, lockers and storage facilities. The K9 sweeps are conducted when students are in classes and/or during non-school hours.

Student Code of Conduct and Consistent Application of Rules

The district has a comprehensive code of conduct that addresses a wide range of student infractions. By applying the specific code that best suits the violation, the schools are guided to the most appropriate and consistent school responses with the goals of improving student behavior and maintaining a safe environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Other Safety Programs:

- Safe Arrival Line
- Bus Safety-accountability
- Recess Supervision
- Procedures for releasing children to adults
- School Nurses and medical response
- Background checks for volunteers