



HILLSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Aspire to Inspire!

*Antoine L. Gayles, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools*

March 15, 2018

An ongoing Washington Post analysis has found that more than 150,000 students attending at least 170 primary or secondary schools have experienced a shooting on campus since the Columbine High School massacre in 1999. That figure, which comes from a review of online archives, state and federal enrollment figures and news stories, is a conservative calculation and does not include dozens of suicides, accidents and after-school assaults that have also exposed youths to gunfire. (Cox and Rich, Washington Post, 2/15/2018)

In light of the wave of school shootings across the country, Hillside Public Schools has taken some proactive measures to minimize the threat of gun violence in our schools:

- 1) Metal detectors at our middle and high school entrances
- 2) Hardened doors on every entrance/egress with magnetic locks in every school building
- 3) A video camera on every front door, a security employee at each building entrance
- 4) Hundreds of cameras in our schools
- 5) A memorandum of agreement between our schools and the Hillside Police Department that provides access to our camera system in emergency and non-emergency situations
- 6) Mantraps at every school's point of entry
- 7) Frequent training for all students, faculty, and staff for emergency situations
- 8) Numbered classrooms and doors on outside windows
- 9) Reunification plans in the event of an emergency

Looking ahead, we plan to:

1. Implement an emergency alert system that will notify the Hillside Police Department and local first responders in the event of an active shooter
2. Coordinate active shooter drills with the State Department of Education's Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning and Hillside Police Department.

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3. Expand our current video monitoring system
4. Install an electronic school visitor management kiosk in each school
5. Investigate hiring Class 3 Special Law Enforcement Officers (SLEO) to patrol our schools
6. Implement the Say Something campaign in our schools


The Say Something Campaign, developed by the survivors of the Sandy Hook school shooting, provides students with the tools to recognize the warning signs of potential violence. Our kids will come to understand that they have great power in controlling the spread of violence. They have the best insight as to who is or can be an actual threat in the school. We have seen that in 80% of all school shootings and in 70% of all suicides, at least one person knew of the perpetrators intentions but chose not to say anything. Say Something is designed to equip middle and high school students with the skills to help keep all of us safe by talking to a trusted adult about potential concerns. If that someone happens to be you, we ask that you quickly and immediately call your school principal or me.

We realize that community members and parents may have questions or concerns about specific security measures. In an effort to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of our security measures, we will not publicly divulge specific strategies we use.

You can help us by talking to your child about the danger of bringing any type of weapon to school, especially a gun and by monitoring your child's activity on social media sites. Our collective efforts can make the difference. I ask each of you to be vigilant and if you see something or hear something, say something. We will investigate and act immediately.

On Saturday, March 17, 2018, a school safety presentation will take place at the Saybrook building, 1100 Woodruff Avenue. Thomas Gambino, from the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning will conduct a 90-minute presentation.

Sincerely,


Antoine L. Gayles, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Hillside Public Schools