

City of Madison, Alabama School Task Force



FINAL REPORT

**MADISON SCHOOL TASK FORCE
CHARTERED ON 15 FEB 2010**

**CHAIRMAN, GENERAL (R) ROBERT DROLET
CO-CHAIR, DR. MARY JANE CAYLOR
CO-CHAIR, MR. REX REYNOLDS**

19 MAY 2010

Tasks Completed Since Preliminary Report



- Evaluated the proximity of first-responders to schools (Fire/HEMSI) and looked at their supporting capabilities.
- Further assessed the School Drug Awareness Programs and the impact of drug use on potential violence.
- Further assessed potential risks associated with Alternative School.
- Reviewed nationally recognized Gang Awareness training.
- Reviewed the model AL SDE Anti-Harassment Policy but not the draft school district implementing policy under development(not available).
- Further studied the behaviors that intimidate others, i.e., bullying.
- Developed additional community feedback information.

Community Feedback Has Continued



- Talk to the Task Force (*TTF*) was established to ask the community for their input on ensuring safe schools.
- Feedback on *TTF* has been consistent.
- The primary community concerns via the *TTF* have been:
 - Training (practice more lockdown drills)
 - Use of metal detectors (consider pros and cons)
 - Access Controls (consistently implemented)
 - Traffic Planning (prepare for road shutdowns and bus transport in a crisis)
 - Reunification (reuniting students to parents)
 - Communication (let students and parents know what's going on)
- Responses are integrated into the Findings and Recommendations to be reported on tonight.

Phase II School Safety Community Survey



- During Phase I, community input was solicited through the Talk to the Task Force website to identify concerns and solicit ideas.
- During Phase II, the community-wide survey on school safety was made available on 24 April on the Madison City School Task Force portal.
 - Over 480 responses received.
- Survey was open to all residents .
- Personal data was not requested in order to maintain confidentiality.
- Results will be reported tonight by the Communication Team

Student Face to Face (F2F) Interviews



- Informal student feedback on school safety concerns was initially solicited outside the school system to gauge the student's concerns and sense of safety.
- 74 students participated in the Community wide school safety survey.
- 20 students were interviewed in a F2F environment.
- Selected student comments from the interviews include:
 - Most feel safe
 - Want to keep schools as “normal” as possible
 - “Pretend gangs” are not a huge problem
 - Drug use is a huge problem
 - Reluctant to report on another student
 - Would prefer texting over other means



**SCHOOL TASK FORCE
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**TERRY E. ODUM
SAFETY/SECURITY TEAM**

Findings and Recommendations

Risk/Threat Assessment



| Finding | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| <p>F1 - Risks have increased over the past 10 years placing greater demands on Central Office, Administrators, and Faculty.</p> | <p>R1 – Consider establishing a Supervisor of School Safety position to plan and execute the school safety program.</p> |
| <p>F2 – Protocols designed to systematically identify, assess, record, and manage issues that pose a threat to health and safety of our schools varied.</p> | <p>R2 – Consider improving threat management protocols and rely on the SRO and other advisors that are trained to determine the credibility of a threat and to assist in early intervention mitigation, and resolution of problems.</p> |
| <p>F3 – Students universally follow a code of silence that inhibits effective communication of potential threats.</p> | <p>R3 – Consider implementing a student friendly, confidential reporting capability (e.g., texting and online messaging) that promotes “<i>SAFE TO SHARE</i>” reporting of threats and invites student questions or concerns without fear of retaliation.</p> |
| <p>F4– The School Resource Officer (SRO) policy and procedures have not been codified. SRO staffing levels should be reassessed. Active Shooter training has occurred but a policy has not been codified and training has not been completed to include faculty.</p> | <p>R4 – Madison Police should consider publishing a SRO policy that clarifies roles/responsibilities and coordinate the policy with school officials. R5 - SRO staffing levels should be assessed for gaps. A hybrid protection program (SRO and Security) should be assessed as an option.</p> |
| <p>F5 – Seven elementary schools are supported by one SRO, stretching resources thin and limiting the positive influence SROs have on students.</p> | <p>R6 – During the SRO gap analysis, consider the benefit of increasing the SRO staffing level at elementary schools to increase influence on students during the formative years.</p> |
| <p>F6 – Safety and emergency preparedness training is limited and may not test all-hazard situations. Time to teach and train all stakeholders is limited.</p> | <p>R7 - Consider developing an annual training plan that addresses all-hazards and teaches Administrators, faculty, staff, SROs, and others their roles and responsibilities.</p> |

Findings and Recommendations

Public Safety, Response, and Recovery



| Finding | Recommendation |
|--|---|
| <p>F7 – Safety Plans that meet minimum state requirements are in place but vary in content, terminology, maturity, and ease of use. Patriot Academy/Alternative School is not under a current Safety Plan.</p> | <p>R8– Consider standardizing the Safety Plan format and content at the district level and require schools to provide a school Annex. Automate the plan development process if possible. Address the need for a PA/AS Safety Plan.</p> |
| <p>F8 – The risk of bullying is high. Bystanders are reluctant to report it. The required response to cyber-bullying is not well understood. The district Policy Committee is currently reviewing a draft anti-harassment policy.</p> | <p>R9 – Consider making anti-harassment a high priority by publishing the district policy, implementing a research-based anti-bullying program, and training faculty, staff, and students. Inspire bystanders to share what they see or hear. Provide awareness materials to parents.</p> |
| <p>F9 – Emergency and medical response teams have excellent training, capabilities, equipment, and response times. Situation awareness is lacking during a crisis and response times can be impacted at times if inaccurate location information is provided.</p> | <p>R10 – Consider a plan to implement the AL Virtual Safe School initiative that will result in greater situation awareness. R11 – Consider the need for a standardized alpha/numeric numbering system for identifying exact locations during an emergency. R12 – Consider coordinating the conduct of a mass exercise that tests the Incident Command and Response effectiveness.</p> |
| <p>F10 – The security controls and technologies (communications, cameras, card readers, etc.) vary in coverage, functionality, and effectiveness.</p> | <p>R13 – Consider and address the technology shortfalls. Assess and improve the maintenance program. Consider a plan to implement the AL Virtual Safe School initiative. R14 – Consider including system specifications and design features in the new high school design package. Consider a licensed security consultant if local school expertise is not available.</p> |

Findings and Recommendations

Policies, Plans, Procedures, and Training



| Finding | Recommendation |
|--|--|
| <p>F11– Visitor management tools and controls exist in all schools but vary in effectiveness. Occasional gaps may exist due to inattention or failure to follow established policy, e.g., doors propped open.</p> | <p>R15/R16 – Reemphasize the need to remain alert and follow established access and visitor controls. Consider enhanced online identification and visitor screening systems for use district wide. R16 – Consider cost-benefits analysis of selected remodel projects to improve visibility at front entrances.</p> |
| <p>F12 –Critical communications are affected by dead spots rendering communications in some schools unreliable.</p> | <p>R17 – Consider initiating an emergency communications effectiveness study to determine options for enhancing communications.</p> |
| <p>F13 – Administrators and faculty at the Patriot Academy/Alternative School are committed. Many risks are mitigated, however, other risk exists and should be assessed.</p> | <p>R18 – Consider an audit to identify/mitigate all risks. Consider requiring community service as a condition to A-School. R19 – Ensure detailed information on student risk behavior is provided to A-School prior to arrival of a new student. R20 – Consider installing a camera at the front entrance for identifying visitors before granting entry. Consider use of portable wands to screen students for weapons.</p> |
| <p>F14 – An understanding of the roles and responsibilities regarding interaction with the media during a crisis varied.</p> | <p>R21 – Consider reviewing policy/procedure on working with the media to ensure timely, appropriate, and reliable communication to the community. Update Safety Plans to reflect the approved policy.</p> |

Findings and Recommendations Assessments and Controls



| Finding | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| <p>F15 – Incident Command (IC) authority is addressed in Safety Plans. However, a clear understanding of the transfer of IC authority to first-responders varied.</p> | <p>R22– Include IC authority and roles and responsibilities as a topic for discussion during table top exercises. Further, the district should conduct a critical Lessons Learned review of the incident at Discovery MS and implement improvements as necessary.</p> |
| <p>F16 – Confidential student information regarding Students of Interest is not always shared from one school to the next school as students move forward.</p> | <p>R23 – Consider establishing a consistent process to share confidential information on a need to know basis so that receiving schools can conduct a risk assessment and intervention plan, as needed.</p> |
| <p>F17 – Faculty and staff are not trained (or expected) to take defensive actions to defend themselves or students if confronted by an armed aggressor.</p> | <p>R24 – Consider the benefits of coordinating a self-defense and survival training for faculty and staff who desire such training.</p> |
| <p>F18 – Parental involvement at elementary schools is strong but begins to wane significantly at Middle School.</p> | <p>R25 – Consider increasing efforts to engage parents to keep them informed and solicit their support in teaching their children about internet safety, expected student behaviors, etc. R26 – Consider sponsoring the innovative WATCH D.O.G.S. program which focuses on school violence in schools by using fathers as a positive role model for students.</p> |
| <p>F19 – The Pride Survey and other indicators reflect that weapons may at times be brought on school property. The ability of the school to detect weapons at entrances is limited. Solutions such as permanent metal detectors are very costly, impacts the school learning environment, and offers limited chance of success.</p> | <p>R27 – Consider increasing training efforts on how to report and respond to reported weapons incidents. Consider the use of portable wands to detect weapons on a case by case basis.</p> |

Findings and Recommendations



| Finding | Recommendation |
|--|---|
| <p>F 20 – There is some inherent risk of threatening behavior at sites located outside the schools that may have fewer controls, i.e., bus loading, modular units, parking lots, sports venues, etc.</p> | <p>R28 – Remind supervisors to remain alert at areas such as bus loading, parking lots, and modular units. Consider training scenarios that address these areas during table top exercises.</p> |
| <p>F21 – There may be some evolving risk from gang associated behavior by a small delinquent group of students at the middle and high school levels. Teachers and staff are a front line defense and should play a key role in mitigating this risk before it has an opportunity to escalate.</p> | <p>R29 – Continue to partner with SROs and Madison Police to monitor potential gang associated activity and respond immediately when the Student Code of Conduct is violated. Provide age appropriate gang awareness training to students and train teachers and staff how to recognize and report signs of gang activity.</p> |
| <p>F22 – Our schools are not shielded from the nationwide student use of drugs and alcohol. Schools continually educate students on the dangers, yet the problem is still prevalent in the schools.</p> | <p>R30 – Continue to educate students on drug use. Consider taking a more proactive enforcement approach to reducing drug use at schools by working closely with the SROs and Madison Police.</p> |
| <p>F23 – Surveillance systems are a useful tool for monitoring suspicious behavior and investigating serious incidents. Cameras are monitored independently by all schools on a limited basis.</p> | <p>R31 – Consider the benefits of establishing a central monitoring capability for remote live monitoring by trained Communications (dispatch) Officers.</p> |
| <p>F24 - There is an inherent risk to students who ride buses due to the lack of supervision. Surveillance cameras may help deter incidents. An estimated 50% of buses are equipped with surveillance cameras.</p> | <p>R32 – Consider auditing the bus transportation system for compliance with school bus safety protocols. Consider continuing to upgrade bus surveillance systems until 100% have been outfitted.</p> |



**SCHOOL TASK FORCE
SCHOOL SAFETY SURVEY RESULTS**

**RODNEY PENNYWELL
COMMUNICATIONS TEAM**

Communication's TF Survey Data

Ending April 30th
2010

Survey Questions




1. I am a(n) (with a child attending a Madison City School)
2. Do you believe our schools are a safe learning environment?
3. Are you reasonably aware of what your responsibilities are in a school emergency (i.e., tornado, earthquake, other)?
4. Do you believe there is adequate communication between the school system and you?
5. Do you believe that students know what they are to do during a school emergency?
6. Do you believe school students can identify potential indicators of violent behavior in other students?
7. Do you believe school students are comfortable with reporting potential indicators of violent behavior to an adult or other authority?
8. Do you know how to communicate potential indicators of violent behavior to appropriate school officials or law enforcement?:
9. Do you know where to go (assemble) during a school emergency?
10. Do you believe bullying is a significant issue in our schools?

Segment

| Segment | Total | Percent |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Parents | 308 | 64% |
| Students | 79 | 16% |
| Faculty Members | 69 | 14% |
| Administrators | 3 | 1% |
| Interested Parties | 23 | 5% |
| Total | 482 | 100% |

Survey Results

| Question | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|----------|-------------------------------|--------|
| Q1 | See Segment Chart for details | |
| Q2 | 85 | 15 |
| Q3 | 84 | 16 |
| Q4 | 70 | 30 |
| Q5 | 80 | 20 |
| Q6 | 60 | 40 |
| Q7 | 27 | 73 |
| Q8 | 80 | 20 |
| Q9 | 52 | 48 |
| Q10 | 67 | 33 |

-  Positive results
-  Additional focus warranted
-  Additional focus required

Survey Data



| Priority | 11. Preferred Means of Communications – Non-Emergency | | 12. What needs to be addressed | 13. What do you need to do more of to enhance safety in schools | 14. What are the suggestions to the Task Force |
|----------|---|-----|--|---|--|
| # 1 | Email | 202 | Bullying | Communication (Letting students and parents know what is going on) | <p>See Next Slide</p> |
| # 2 | Telephone | 111 | Training | Training (Practice more lockdown drills) | |
| # 3 | Text Messaging | 78 | Better Communication | Use of metal detectors (Consider the pros & cons) | |
| # 4 | Email (Listserv) | 54 | Address issues quickly | Access Control (Consistently implemented) | |
| # 5 | Public Media | 18 | Tougher Consequences | Traffic Planning (Preparation for road shutdowns and bus transport in a crisis) | |
| # 6 | Websites | 8 | Better understanding by Parents/Students of Emergency Procedures | Reunification (Reuniting students to parents) | |

Survey Data – Question 14 Comments

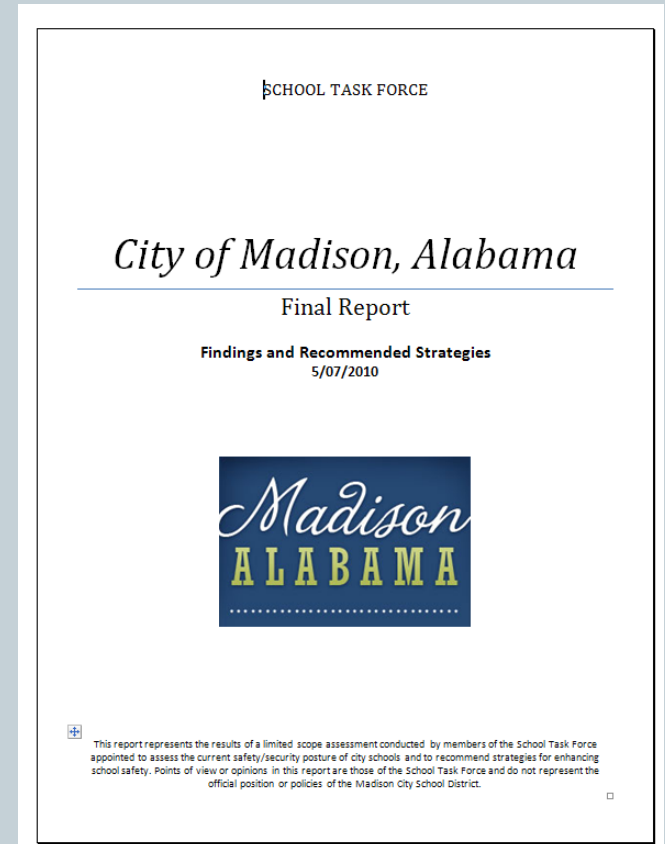


14. What are the suggestions to the Task Force

1. **Drugs – Stricter punishment desired.**
2. **Uniforms for children should be considered.**
3. **Stricter enforcement and punishment of smaller incidents so they don't grow to larger problems.**
4. **Bullying is a issue that needs more attention.**
 - a) **Students and Teachers need training.**
 - b) **Constant identification of all persons.**
5. **Peer Programs (Start them early)(Teach Responsibility)**
6. **Continue to promote safety at every school event.**
7. **Establish a Confidential Tip line.**
8. **Parent Responsibility of their child (Teach).**
9. **Must identify and communicate assembly areas.**
10. **Take “Gang” issues very seriously and follow up.**
11. **Concern of School Board not doing anything with recommendations of the task force.**
12. **Substitute Teacher training on current policies (Code Red) is necessary.**
13. **Automatic Notification Systems – Madison City Schools need an automatic Notification system.**
14. **Include Key Stakeholders in Policy decisions**
15. **More serious attention to teacher reported problems.**
16. **Make CARE Counselors available Post-Event.**
17. **Add More training for teachers.**
18. **Establish a committee to oversee implementation of the Task Force Recommendations.**
19. **Some fear this report will not be considered.**
20. **Some want metal detectors in the school.**
21. **Cell Phone should be allowed.**
22. **Some students are not aware of Lockdown procedures especially during breaks/class change.**
23. **Substitute teacher training for current policies (Code Red) needed.**
24. **Random searches should be conducted.**

Madison City Schools should...

- **Establish a Safety Coordinator**
 - Use Periodic Exercises to Train Key Resources
 - Resolve SRO Communication Issues.
 - Review TF Recommendations
 - Follow Best Practices
- **Enhance Communications w/Stakeholders.**
 - Develop Parent / Student Emergency Handbook
 - Install Confidential Texting
- **Address Culture and Parental Involvement**
 - Address student sense of responsibility
 - Involve parents for student role models
- **Attack Growing Problems (May Need Further Study)**
 - Want to be Gangs
 - Bullying / Cyber Bullying





SUMMARY AND CLOSING

GENERAL DROLET

Results



- While the System is relatively safe-it needs attention.
- It is believed by the STF that several basic changes and upgrades can be made to the overall security and safety conditions that will significantly enhance the secure environment needed to conduct the learning experience.
- Included in this final report are 40 Findings and 43 Recommendations from the STF. As these are implemented over the next few years, the system safety profile and environment will be significantly improved.

Key Summary Points



- Emphasize *prevention* through faculty and staff training; drills; increased parental involvement; collaboration, and information sharing.
- Further integrate and expand the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. Establish effective SRO communications(fix communications)
- Phased upgrade of the surveillance / monitoring program in concert with the Homeland Security Office, *Virtual AL Safe Schools* initiative.
- Upgrade and control school access via technology upgrade.
- Implement a web based student communication system that allows for “confidential” texting and messaging.
- **KEY RECOMMENDATION:** Establish a “Supervisor of School Safety and Communications” position to assist all administrators in maintaining a safe environment and to enhance communication between all stakeholders.



Back Up

Key Take - Aways



- Safety costs should be defined as part of an annual budget to ensure adequate funding for security and SRO staffing.
- Physical security measures such as communications equipment and camera systems; staff training; upgraded technology for proper entry control are needed.
- Vulnerability of “ portables” and other outside school areas.
- Exchange of student information between schools needs to be proactive and timely.
- Allocation of SRO’s and integration into all aspects of the school.
- Need for a Supervisor of School Safety and Communications at the District level.

Key Take- Aways (cont.)



- Achieving more year-round Parental involvement.
- Expedited communications from schools to parents.
- Reaching out to connect with students.
 - Use technology that students most often use in order to build trust and confidence that observed or overheard threatening behavior is *Safe to Share*.
- Providing intervention tips on dealing with *behavioral warning signs* and expediting communications from parents to schools.

Summary



- The community can be proud of its school system and the dedication and professionalism of its teacher-school staff and law enforcement support.
- Policies/procedures/processes/ and tools are in place but can be improved.
- Ongoing dialogue and shared responsibility with all stakeholders is vital to the long term success of a safe schools program.
- Increased parental engagement/involvement is necessary in our schools.
- The current system needs attention and there are areas that call for improvement.
- Providing schools and law enforcement with the tools and resources they need is essential to maintaining a secure educational environment.
- Must continue to find creative ways to teach and encourage positive behavior.
- It is a “SHARED” responsibility of all stakeholders to achieve the recommendations made by the STF.



Back Up Communications Team

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



OBSERVATIONS

- Parents and students are sometimes unaware of procedures to follow during an emergency situation and that expected of them.
- Survey results support that Parents want to know basic school policies during an emergency (i.e., checkout of students during a tornado, etc).
- Students expressed great reluctance to report information they knew if a Confidential method was not in place.
- Students expressed desire to be able to type, or text information.
- Currently there is not a single point of contact that has the authority and responsibility to ensure that a viable plan is in place, practiced, and evaluated.
- During the Task Force investigation, it was discovered that all Emergency procedures for the Madison City Schools were not standardized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 Develop an Emergency Handbook that explains in the appropriate language, that kids can take home to parents and discuss with parents. Have parent sign and return to school.
- R2 Make available a means to allow students, parents, etc to Confidentially text important information to authorities for disposition. Define the term Confidentiality. Making this tool web-based will facilitate dissemination needs.
- R3 The Madison City School System should employ a full-time School Safety Coordinator for the 2010 – 2011 school year to begin developing this program and implementing the recommendations addressed by the Task Force.
- R4 Create a standardized Emergency Procedure Template for Madison City Schools. The template will standardize emergency procedures but be modified for each school, they should be reviewed/updated periodically.
- Procedures should address, emergency procedures, how the program will be trained, and notification procedures.
- This should be a part of the School Safety Plan.
- Implement a “School Security & Communication Report Card” that evaluates the School Safety Plan on a regular basis.

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



OBSERVATIONS

- Task Force examined the way the schools train and noted that The School System could benefit from the use of periodic exercises.
- Exercises scenarios could replicate : shooter on site, epidemic, bomb threat, major fire, major external terrorist attack, major economic dislocation, infrastructure failure (power grid outage coupled with extreme heat, loss of the Web or telephone lines, and disruption in the water supply).
- The Task Force determined that current Technology Mediums are insufficient for Pre, During & Post Incident use. The Safety Team should thoroughly evaluate other means of communication for use Pre, During & Post incident by Key Stakeholders.
- There were no standardized Emergency Kits within each of the classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R5 This is the core plan that links each of the planning scenarios to the response modules that will be immediately activated.
- Develop a combinations of pre-set response "modules" off the shelf. Modularizing the elements of a crisis response plan provides the organization with flexibility to deal with unexpected scenarios or combinations of scenarios. Response modules might include: facility lockdown, police or fire response, evacuation, isolation (preventing people from entering facilities), medical containment (response to significant epidemic), grief management, as well as external communication to media and other external constituencies.
- R6 Designate an emergency channel for communication
- Establish system of rapid communication between all stakeholders
- Identify alternate means in the School Safety Plan and ensure that personnel understand their use and under what circumstances.
- Identify alternate means in the School Safety Plan and ensure that personnel understand their use and under what circumstances.
- Better hardware to enable no black out areas for radio and cell communication.
- R7 Emergency kit for each Classroom – Communication device (plus possibly water, food, emergency medical supplies, glass break tool).

Communications is the Key – Plan for Key Stakeholder activities Pre, During, and Post Incident

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



OBSERVATIONS

- During the Emergency situation, it was noted that there was a need for multiple avenues of communication for all Stakeholders, especially, where parents can retrieve information regarding an emergency situation – website, blog, call-in, dedicated TV channel, Rally Point with a pre-designated Public Affairs person authorized to speak on behalf of the administration.
- There is currently no evaluation or baseline in which to assess current policies, practices.
- Additional support and manpower to control scene during aftermath of incident as parents and media arrive.
- Madison City Schools need more SROs for the Middle and High Schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R8 Identify multiple avenues of communication during an emergency situation.
- Designate an emergency channel for communication
- Establish system of rapid communication between all stakeholders
- Create a pre-Approved “Crisis” Script for each medium used
- R9 Establish a “School Safety & Communication’s Report Card” to ensure continued assessment and improvement of safety.
- Report Card is a tool to be used by the new ‘Safety Coordinator’ and will provide a forum to assess safety posture and identify shortfalls/needs if required.
- The Report Card will provide a baseline for the School’s Safety Posture.
- The results of the Report Card can be compared to Federal, State and local best practices.
- R10 Need to identify additional support to control scene during aftermath of incident as parents and media arrive.
- Employ additional SROs and staff trained to act in support of police.

Communications is the Key – Plan for Key Stakeholder activities Pre, During, and Post Incident

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



OBSERVATIONS

- One of the major complaints and lessons learned during the Columbine shooting was the incompatibility of communication systems among different agencies and jurisdictions. This same issue applies in Madison City Schools, it was discovered that the SROs communication equipment should be upgraded and thus more effectively serve all 1st Responders.
- The Communications Team observed that there was also little or no plans regarding communications in any of the current policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R11 An effective means to communicate by all members of the Safety Team should be addressed in The Safety Plan . This plan should be standardized at the District Level and address the actions of key stakeholders including the: Principal, Vice Principal who will act as the Public Affairs Chief, Faculty members, Parents, and SROs. etc.
- The Safety Plan (Crisis Management) would adhere to State Law and address: (See Below)

Safety Plan Must

- Assesses and provides structure
- Communications
- Promotes Community
- Prepares for the crisis
- Responds during the crisis
- Evaluates effectiveness
- Develop a protocol for reporting circumstances of concern or unusual incidents.
- Define roles and responsibilities in emergency situations.
- Determine appropriate procedures in the event of a violent situation.

- Develop ways to summon internal security personnel or response teams.
- Identify ways to activate alert systems including local Emergency Medical services and preventive measures.
- Develop ways to maximize safety and minimize risks in emergency situations.
- Involve Families and assist them in preparing their Emergency Plan to communicate or locate their children
- Include by policy a by-classroom role-call once all-clear is given to provide 100% accountability of students.
- Evaluation Methods (School Report Card)

Communications is the Key – Plan for Key Stakeholder activities Pre, During, and Post Incident