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Florida Safe Schools Assessment

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING – OCTOBER 17, 2023



Background

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (Senate Bill 7026) was signed into law March 9, 2018, and Senate Bill 7030 on May 8, 2019.

Section 1006.07(6) Florida Statute requires school districts and public school sites to use the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool (FSSAT) to conduct a self-assessment of the school district's current health and safety and security practices. This is referred to as the School Security Risk Assessment (SSRA)

Requires that the assessment tool be available for use by charter schools. [All district charter schools submitted an assessment as well as all charter schools. 100% completion]

Answers to the assessment are used by the State to assess Grant funding



Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool

The FSSAT is the primary physical site security assessment tool which is used by school officials at each school district and public school site in the state in conducting security assessments. The tool is designed help school officials identify threats, vulnerabilities, and appropriate safety controls for the schools that they supervise, and addressed the following:

- School emergency and crisis preparedness planning;
- Security, crime, and violence prevention policies and procedures;
- Physical security measures;
- Professional development training needs;
- An examination of support service roles in school safety, security, and emergency planning;
- School security and school police staffing, operational practices, and related services;
- School and community collaboration on school safety; and
- A return on investment analysis of the recommended physical security controls.



Objective



Sarasota County Schools provides educational services for over 45,000 public school students living in Sarasota County and its four local municipalities - Longboat Key, North Port, Sarasota, and Venice - and is recognized as one of the top school districts in the State of Florida. The District's educational services meet a wide range of educational and workforce development needs including traditional and charter K-12 public school services at the 58 elementary, middle, and high schools; a gifted school for students in grades 2-12; a special needs school for students from Pre-K-12; and workforce and technical programs at Suncoast Technical College. Through these schools, the District produces graduates that are college or career-ready. The objective of the Sarasota County Schools Best Practices Assessment is to demonstrate to the district school board that a school security risk assessment was completed at each school campus by the October 1, 2023 due date as required by Florida Law (section 1006.07(6)(a) 4., Florida Statutes) and that the findings and recommendations of these assessments were presented to Superintendent Connor and each member of the Sarasota County School Board. This Executive Summary will address the efforts of Sarasota County Schools with regard to legislative compliance under the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (MSDPSA) (Public Safety - Chapter 2018-3, Laws of Florida), the recommendations of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission recommendations as implemented into Florida law (Chapter 2019-22, Laws of Florida), and best practices related to school safety and security. Furthermore, this summary identifies strategies and activities that the district school board should consider implementing in order to address the assessment findings and improve school safety and security.



Positive School Measures



The Sarasota County School System has implemented several positive school measures over the last year. The district has worked closely with all schools including charters to implement the Standard Reunification Method. We have trained representatives from all schools except College Prep in the SRM. We have implemented the Raptor Emergency Management Suite in all traditional and charter public schools, except College Prep. The district has continued to add 3m reflective film on all classroom door windows and other locations where it was determined that it is needed. We continue to update and place safe corner signs in every classroom, hardened the entrance lobby and receptionist area of all schools. The district continues to modernize the camera systems and our access control systems. Our fencing project is also ongoing. We brought all district and school radios from the UHF band to the P25 900 MHZ band to better facilitate communication between our schools and first responders. We are now implementing district-wide measures to meet NFPA standards for the radio system. The district radio system has proven to be one of the most important additions for functionality during an emergency as demonstrated during Hurricane Ian. The district met all drill requirements for 2022 - 2023 school year. We also continue to work on integrating all of our security systems as well as our district departments.



Positive School Measures



The District has implemented the much of the requirements for the Florida Threat Management Model already with the hard work of the District Threat Management Team. This team consists of Amanda Coker – District Mental Health Coordinator, Michel Santagata – District Threat Management Coordinator, Interim Captain John Dominguez – SCSPD, Dr. Dawn Clayton – Director District Intervention Programs, Heather Wiebke – Program Specialist Exceptional Student Education, Karen Stull – Program Specialist, Student Support Services and Me.

The District had the foresight through the leadership of Executive Director Deb Giacolone, Chief of Staff Chris Renouf, and Chief Operating Officer Jody Dumas to put the District Threat Management Team in place over a year before it was requested then mandated by the Office of Safe Schools. This gave our team the time we needed to work through and implement these procedures and sweeping changes in the process even as the State waived in its own process.



School Security Risk Assessment Results



All Sarasota County Schools are compliant with the required school safety tour.

The District will receive grant funding to remap every school in the district including charters schools. The mapping will then be provided to all emergency responders in any format they wish so they can access our maps during an emergency without going through a district owned system. This will allow for more fluid planning, command, and control during emergencies at all district and charter locations.

25% of schools are requesting improvements to fencing

80% of schools have requested more gates.

84% of schools are requesting Wi-Fi or LTE signal boosters

96% of schools have requested more school assigned security personnel. All reported funding as to why they are not able to implement these needs.



Strategies and Actions



The district is continuing to move forward with new fencing and gate improvements at all our sites. Our schools will continue to be upgraded with new and improved camera systems and access control systems. Sarasota County Schools has already begun training for all administrators in unified command, reunification, proper drill procedures, and the Florida Threat Management Model. We have completed merging our school communication network with the County's Emergency Communication Network, so we have seamless communication with all first responder agencies. We are now working with the County to expand this capacity to be able to accommodate the growth of the district. We are looking into purchasing cell phone and Wi-Fi signal boosters while also working with our current security systems programmers on better ways to integrate all of our technologies..



Fiscal Impacts



The fiscal impacts of implementing school safety modernization is significant. There are significant mandates from the State of Florida with far too little money being sent to get done what all needs to be done. Implementing emergency communication upgrades, access control on exterior doors and gates, modernizing camera systems and then integrating these systems with our other measures that are in place is very expensive. Sarasota County Schools has made securing our school and keeping students safe a priority and we will work through our improvement lists as quickly as we can.



Findings and Recommendations



Sarasota County Schools meets or exceeds the best practices thresholds in all school safety areas. Meeting these standards is not enough. Sarasota County continues to push forward with better ways to work with all of our stake holders improving the environment at schools for our students to learn and excel

Recommendations:

- Continue improving school electronic and physical security infrastructure
- Continue our efforts in Threat Management training
- Continue efforts in Youth Mental Health First Aid Training
- Pursue funding for continued hardening of schools
- Continue with active shooter training and drills with all law enforcement partners
- Improve Communication within the schools with Emergency Responders and Staff



Findings and Recommendations



This summary is provided by the school safety specialist, based on the school security risk assessments and district best practices assessment. The Office of the Superintendent and the Office of Safety, Security, and Emergency Management are committed to implementing the recommendations and findings that were identified within the Florida Safe School Assessment Tool (FSSAT) for 2023-2024. Therefore, in accordance with the provisions outlined in section 1006.07(6), F.S., the aforementioned assessment findings as well as the recommended strategies and activities to improve school safety and security are hereby presented to the school board for consideration and approval.

Closing

Thank you to

Chief Lorenz

Sean O'Keefe

Daniel Barazoto

Jonie Kennedy

Heath Guck

Borbala Stephenson

And all administrators that worked so hard to get this completed.

