Port Chester-Rye UFSD
Safety and Security Re-assessment
August 2024
INTRODUCTION

Overall Perception of the District

Altaris commends the Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District for their openness, and we were grateful for the cooperation and availability shown to us by staff while conducting this re-assessment. During an open analysis such as this, it is sometimes easy to highlight problem areas or negative aspects. Our consultants, however, always look to identify and highlight the successes and positives as well. It is important to remember that the nature of our assessment process is to identify vulnerabilities and to highlight opportunities for improvement.

The primary focus of our re-assessment is to identify risks and gaps in the current system and prevent safety, security, and emergency management issues before they occur. The District can mitigate these in numerous ways including, but not limited to:

- Continuing the process of implementing, improving or modifying safety and security policies and protocols for all staff and students to understand and follow
- Adding, improving, or modifying existing technology, some of which is already in progress
- Continuing to strengthen the relationships between the District and local emergency responders
- Increasing the type and frequency of training for all staff
- Continually conducting and evaluating drills at each school building
- Continuing to foster a strong partnership with the community

The District should avoid exhausting financial resources on any one improvement opportunity, but rather continue to invest in a variety of safety and security upgrades to provide a layered approach.
IN PROGRESS/COMPLETED IMPROVEMENTS

Our re-assessment revealed that the District implemented numerous improvement opportunities identified in our past assessment of the District and currently has many best practices in place. The following improvements are in progress or have been made and have proven to be successfully implemented into the district’s commitment to safety and security.

District-Wide Improvements

- **School Identification** - All staff are required to wear identification with a similarly colored breakaway lanyard. This identification also serves as their key card access to the buildings and, in the near future, classrooms.

- **Main Entrances** - Secured vestibules are in the planning phase of being added to all school buildings throughout the District.

- **Visitor Policy** - A new visitor policy was created and approved by the school board. This policy identifies a single point of entry for all schools as well as our the screening policy for all visitors.

- **Parent/Student/Staff Safety Guide** - A parent emergency information guide and a student/staff emergency information guide were created and approved by the school board.

- **Anonymous Reporting System** - An MOU has been created and approved by the school board for a district wide anonymous reporting system through Sandy Hook Promise.

- **Evacuation Locations** - Evacuation locations have been reviewed and new locations established for most schools. Evaluations will continue to ensure safety.

- **Door Hardening Policy** - A new door hardening policy was created and approved by the school board. This policy allows faculty/staff to block/barricade classroom doors during a lockdown emergency.

- **SRO Program** - The district has implemented a school resource officer program. The program includes a police officer from RBPD, who is assigned to the middle and high school during school hours.

- **Emergency Responder Collaboration** - The district has established a working and ongoing relationship with PCPD, RBPD, FD and EMS to ensure the safety and security of the district.
COMPLETED IMPROVEMENTS

- **Portable Radio Communication System** - The school district has established a district wide portable communication system, which will allow all facilities to communicate through handheld portable radios.

- **Student Accounting System** - The district has created a student accounting system, the red card green card system, for all elementary schools and the middle school. This system will allow for the quick attendance/accounting for students during an emergency.

- **Intercom/Doorbell System** - The district has installed a new doorbell/intercom security systems in all of our facilities. The new intercom/doorbell camera system will be added into our new security camera operating system.

- **Safety Teams** - Building-level Emergency Response Teams, Emergency Response Teams and the District Safety Team now contain all required members as per NYSED.

- **All-Hazards Emergency Procedures** - All Safety Teams have received and will continue to receive the District Emergency Response Training provided by Altaris.

- **Drills and Evaluations** - Lockdown release is now being done by the required key-out procedure with assistance from the Safety Teams, Port Chester Police Department and Rye Brook Police Department.

- **Incident Command System/Parent Reunification** - Most Safety Teams have been trained in ICS/Parent Reunification and the remaining teams will be trained this year.

- **Key Management** - Digital keys/key cards are being issued to all staff to access all external doors with door access control. In addition, we are in the purchasing stage of installing wireless electronic interior door locks on all classrooms and offices. This process will be managed by Human Resources, Technology, Facilities and Security.

- **School Security** - Building security now has access to all exterior cameras for their respective buildings and monitors these cameras regularly. In addition, the School District Safety and Security Coordinator position has been added to monitor and train security staff, oversee ongoing security projects, conduct training of faculty and staff for all buildings and direct security operations for all buildings in the district. A security command center has been added to the district to allow for continuous management of any and all security operations.

- **Threat Assessment** - Threat assessment teams have been established in every building and additional training for all members is planned for the upcoming school year.
COMPLETED IMPROVEMENTS

Equipment

- **Emergency Protocol Flip Charts** - These are now located in every office and classroom in a majority of our schools. We will be ordering these for the other schools that do not currently have them in the upcoming school year.

Interior/Exterior

- **Exterior Lighting** - Updates to exterior lighting (LED) have been made at all buildings.

- **Interior Room Doors and Locksets** - All exterior doors with FOB access have been upgraded to a new door reader system. This new technology is much more secure and cannot be defeated by commercially available products. In addition, all classrooms and offices will be outfitted with wireless electronic door locks. Installation is expected to commence in the next few months.

- **Evacuation Maps** - Evacuation maps containing primary and secondary means of egress have been installed in some buildings. New evacuation maps will be installed in all other facilities in the upcoming school year.

- **Electrical Panels** - Electrical panels in all buildings have been secured with a padlock or key.

- **Room & Window Numbering** - Interior and exterior windows and doors have been numbered district-wide.
COMPLETED IMPROVEMENTS

Technology

- **PA System** - The District has integrating the PA system with the lockdown panic system.

- **Lockdown Panic System** - The district has installed a lockdown panic system at every building district-wide. This includes pull-stations, strobe lights, disabled exterior and interior swipe access and VoIP phone integration.

- **Access Control** - Key cards are in place for all employees. Law enforcement has 24/7 access to the buildings via key fobs and master keys that are placed in all department vehicles. In addition, key personnel in both police departments have been issued a key card and master key. Employees, based on their role, have different access levels.

- **Security Cameras** - All schools have installed and are utilizing/monitoring a significant amount of cameras throughout each building.

- **Visitor Management** - The Raptor Visitor Management System is utilized at all school buildings, including the District office.

- **Door Ajar Sensors** - Door ajar sensors have been installed on ALL exterior doors throughout the district. These sensors will alert administrators via email that a specific door has been left ajar, along with a security camera still photo of said door.
IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Our re-assessment revealed that the District implemented numerous improvement opportunities identified in our past assessment of the District and currently has many best practices in place. Staff are committed to improving safety and security district-wide. This level of commitment will be essential as we work closely with the District on the implementation of improvement opportunities that were identified.

The following are key improvement opportunities that were identified:

District-Wide

- **Employee Sign-In/Sign-Out** - There are no required sign-in/sign-out procedures for staff arriving and leaving the building at any of the schools.
- **VOIP Phone System** - Install VOIP phones in all classrooms throughout the district.
- **Radio Communication Repeater System** - Install a district wide portable radio communication repeater system. This will allow all radios to communicate with each other throughout the district.
- **Enhancement of current lockdown system** - Install blue LED lights and digital notification signs in all mass gathering locations- gyms, auditoriums, cafeterias.
- **Security Camera Installation** - numerous security camera blind spots have been identified throughout the district. The district should purchase and install cameras to address this security need.
- **Exterior Speakers on all Schools** - The district should install exterior PA system speakers in all locations throughout the district.

Interior/Exterior

- **Uniform Signage** - A uniformed, district-wide, signage plan should be developed and subsequently installed at each school building.
- **Interior Door Windows** - The District should consider utilizing film on interior door windows and other partition windows where doing so would enhance room security.
- **Securing Unoccupied/Occupied Classrooms** - All classroom doors should be closed and locked at all times during the school day.
- **Traffic Safety Vests** - Any adult assisting with traffic currently wears a safety vest. Safety vests have been provided for all Safety Team members as well.
- **Reunification Kits** - Purchase, assemble and distribute kits to high school and the district office.
NEXT STEPS

The assessment of the District provides the foundation for future work to improve safety and security district-wide. The following are short-term interventions, which will take place during the remainder of the 2024-25 school year.

Staff Development Training

While technology plays an integral part in the overall safety and security program, technology does not respond to emergencies; people do. Building-level Emergency Response Teams will participate in comprehensive emergency planning and response training in May. The training will be one in a series of role-specific training programs designed to develop the confidence and capabilities of employees across the District to prevent and manage safety and security incidents.

Emergency Plans

Our team of emergency planning experts are currently revising each of the District's Building-level Emergency Plans as well as the District-wide Safety Plan with the goal of creating plans that are:

- Fully compliant with New York State regulations
- Steeped in best practices
- Provide actionable guidance in an emergency

Upon completion of each plan, our consulting team will review the plans with each school and the district administration for approval. Plans will then follow the required process for approval by the Board of Education in advance of the annual September 1st deadline.

Project Management

While our comprehensive assessment provides a great deal of vital information for improving the overall level of safety and security in the District, real progress will come from effective project management of improvement opportunities. Our consulting team will be facilitating ongoing planning sessions with District administration to:

- Gain conceptual agreement on improvement opportunities
- Identify the appropriate District employee who will be accountable for the opportunities for implementation
- Develop a timeline for the completion of short, medium and long-term planning tasks

Continued project management of improvement opportunities will help support real progress district-wide and ultimately improve the District’s safety and security condition.
SUMMARY

Our re-assessment of the District should be viewed and presented as a highly positive experience for all. Altaris observed positive support from the administration throughout the District. This level of commitment is essential in identifying, addressing, and facing opportunities head on to help improve the climate, culture, and level of emergency preparedness in the District. Our experience in this field shows us that schools are more likely to experience injuries and death of both students and staff when they lack the willingness to conduct proper assessments.

We are confident that the District has the desire and ability to address the concerns and findings in this report. Although we have identified numerous opportunities for improvement, we are impressed by the readiness and willingness of staff to address issues of safety, security and emergency management. We look forward to working with the District on the implementation of improvement opportunities.