Wake County Board of Education
Task Force for Creating Safer Schools in Wake County
Final Report

In February 2013, Wake County School Board Chairman Keith Sutton created a community task force to review school safety issues in the district. Mr. Sutton asked the task force to conduct a comprehensive review of school safety and security plans across the district, and to develop a set of recommendations to bolster safety and security at all schools. The following resolution gave the task force its charge:

> One of the primary goals of the Wake County Public School System is to provide a safe learning environment for every child that sets foot on a campus in our system. On any given day, when I kiss my daughters good bye and tell them to have a good day in school, I nor any other parent, expects that to be perhaps the last day that I may see my child alive. Schools should be, and many of us expect them to be, one of the safest places where many children spend most of their time. It is our responsibility, as the Board, administration, and staff of the Wake County Public School System to live up to that expectation.

> It is to this end, that I am appointing the **_Task Force for Creating Safer Schools in Wake County_**. This 15-20 member task force of public safety experts and practitioners will convene to develop and recommend effective policies for the Wake County Board of Education to consider for adoption that will improve the campus safety of our 169 schools. The Task Force will be led by Sheriff Donnie Harrison of Wake County and Al White, Retired Captain - Raleigh Police Department, and a Wake County resident.

> As an ad hoc committee of the Board of Education, the Task Force will provide a comprehensive review of the school system's safety and security plan. This will inform the Task Force and guide them to make policy recommendations to the board in four key areas: 1) Prevention and Mitigation, 2) Preparedness, 3) Response, and 4) Recovery. These four areas are based upon the four areas used by the United States Department of Education's Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities. These same four areas were similarly used in a 2006 report commissioned by then Governor Mike Easley entitled Keeping North Carolina Schools Safe & Secure.

> I am charging this task force to complete its work in the next 90-120 days, as they will meet as necessary to complete their work. I, along with the two co-chairs, will quickly identify members of the education and security professions, along with the community, to serve on this task force. Interim Superintendent Dr. Stephen Gainey and Security Director Russ Smith will serve as the lead staff persons for this effort, and Board Member John Tedesco will serve as board liaison.

> With the expert assistance of Captain White, who currently serves with the North Carolina Central University Police Department and Sheriff Harrison, I am certain that through this effort, Wake County Public Schools will be better prepared, will see improved communications, and experience safer schools in our communities.

The task force included the following members:

Keith Sutton	Wake County Board of Education (Chair)
Donnie Harrison	Wake County Sheriff (Co-Chair)
Captain Al White	NC Central University Police Department (Co-Chair)
Wanza Cole	WCPSS Division of Principals/Assistant Principals
Voris McBurnette	NC Dept. of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice
Bill Chamberlain	NC Dept. of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management
Phil Matthews	Wake County Board of Commissioners
Martin Zielinski	Federal Bureau of Investigation (retired)
Dr. Andrew Evans	Diplomate, American Board of Toxicology
Rukiya Dillahunt	Education Justice Alliance
Nancy Caggia	Community Member
Richard "Dick" Sears	Mayor, Holly Springs
Jason Langberg	Advocates for Children's Services
Benny Langdon	Crisis and Assessment Services
Karin Evanoff	Community Member
Joshua Creighton	Wake County Emergency Management
Stanley Elliott	Shaw University
Mike Longmire	Risk Management Associates
Larry Nilles	Wake NCAE
Maria Spaulding	Retired
Dr. Debra Weisel	NC State University, Dept. of Political Science and Public Administration
David Goodwin	Wake County General Services Administration
Robert Stagg	Guardsmark

The task force held six meetings between March 2013 and May 2013. Specific dates and major agenda items for each meeting are listed in the following table:

Date	Agenda Focus
March 14	• Overview of Purpose and Anticipated Outcomes for Task Force • Current Status of Security in WCPSS • Safe Schools Planning Guidelines (NCDPI)
March 28	• Purpose and Anticipated Outcomes • Comprehensive Security Program and Master Plan (Risk Management Associates) • Review of Decisionmaking Process and Protocols • Begin Development of Recommendations
April 11	• Review Purpose and Anticipated Outcomes • Overview of Discipline, Bullying, Mental Health and Crisis Response Processes in WCPSS (WCPSS staff) • Continue Development of Recommendations
April 25	• Review Purpose and Anticipated Outcomes • Public Schools Security Overview (Moore County Schools) • Understanding of Global Nature of Recommendations • Continue Development of Recommendations

May 16	- Finalize Draft Recommendations - Prevention and Mitigation - Preparedness - Response - Recovery - Feedback on Recommendations
May 23	- Review of the Task Force Process - National Perspective on School Safety (US Dept. of Education) - Review/Seek Agreement on Recommendations - Next Steps

Based on the information gathered and discussed through the work of the Task Force during these meetings, a final list of 15 recommendations was developed and approved at the May 23rd meeting. The following table lists each of those recommendations along with the supporting data behind each recommendation.

WAKE COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Task Force for Creating Safer Schools in Wake County

Recommendations Approved by Task Force on May 23, 2013

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On Thursday, May 23, 2013, Task Force members approved the following Recommendations.

Final #	RECOMMENDATION AS APPROVED ON MAY 23	RATIONALE AS APPROVED ON MAY 23, 2013: *What is the supporting data/evidence for this recommendation?*
1	Have a third party conduct an evaluation/needs assessment (school climate assessment) of prevention efforts, including, but not limited to, data and information pertaining to each of the recommendations below.	**RATIONALE:** *WCPSS doesn't currently conduct regular, comprehensive evaluations of its prevention efforts. Evaluations are needed to determine gaps in services, needs, effectiveness, etc.*
2	Institute evidence-based drug education in all middle and high schools, and make substance abuse treatment available (i.e., in house or through partnerships) for all students who need it.	**RATIONALE:** *Drug use is the most prevalent crime among students. Drug use and drug-related activity can lead to violence.*
3	All schools should have safety education and training for students, staff, families, and local communities.	**RATIONALE:** *Wake County schools have cameras but footage is rarely monitored and not centralized. Currently, there is a lack of training around school safety.*
4	Drawing on evidence-based practices, each WCPSS school should have: • Bullying prevention and social and emotional learning programs; • Access to peer mediation and alternative dispute resolution (e.g., restorative justice) programs or services; • Parent engagement initiatives (e.g., parent mentors, trainings, liaisons, etc.); and • A consistent, well-utilized system to connect students and families to effective community-based service provides.	**RATIONALE:** *The WCPSS doesn't currently have district-wide bullying prevention and social and emotional learning programs; peer mediation programs; alternative dispute resolution programs; or parent engagement initiatives. These programs take place on a school-by-school basis and most schools do not have them. Research shows that these programs are effective in reducing school violence. Parents should be partners in violence prevention.*

#	Recommendation	Rationale
5	Each WCPSS school should have a full-time, highly-trained (including training in the use of threat assessments) staff of therapeutic professionals, including counselors, school social workers, psychologists, and nurses. • These professionals should not be taken away from their core duties to assist with administrative duties, proctoring tests, etc. • These professionals should form support teams for students who exhibit misbehavior or a propensity for violence. • The teams should include the professionals, the student, and the student's teachers, family, and community supports (e.g., coach, mentor, pastor, tutor, therapist, doctor, etc.) • Support decisions that bring the ratio of student support services staff to students closer to 1:250 as recommended by the American School Counselor Association.	*RATIONALE: WCPSS has an inadequate number (based on comparisons to national standards) of counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, nurses, and other mental health professionals. These personnel should be assigned to specific schools in order to facilitate the building of deep, meaningful relationships with students, staff, families, and local resources.* *Adequate student services staffing is necessary for both the prevention of emergency events and recovery from such events. Due to budgetary constraints and day-to-day operational needs of schools, the ability of in-school mental health personnel—school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, etc.—to adequately address the needs of students is severely limited.*
6	Full scale risk assessment for the county by an independent resource. Security regions develop needs assessment using a tier system to provide a minimal standard of security coverage.	*RATIONALE: At this point WCPSS does not have an accurate needs assessment system-wide, regionally and site based to understand how to focus resources throughout the 167 schools.*
7	Develop a system-wide, comprehensive, all-hazard Emergency Operation and Security Master Plan of preparedness from the top down of common methodology to manage by objectives that is not site based but with some site flexibility for uniqueness. • Based on NIMS (National Incident Management System) based communication and follow HSEP (Homeland Security Emergency Plan). • Systematic training and exercises for multiple scenarios. • Random checks on site based school box for up to date information. • Routine compliance checks by rotating independent inspectors. • Clear standards and frequency for exercising various scenarios on a routine basis should be implemented. These exercises should have post review with Improvement Plan if necessary. • The Plan should have clear duties and roles (including visitors & substitutes) defined and accountability at all levels. • Update Emergency Operations Plans to identify mental and behavioral health providers and provide for regular communication between those providers and school-based student services personnel.	*RATIONALE: Wake County Public School System does not have a comprehensive, all inclusive, Emergency Operations Plan to be used at the system level as a foundation for individual school EOP plans. The current version is more of a site specific emergency response plan and a system wide plan is needed.*

#	Recommendation	Rationale
8	There should be high quality consistent equipment at all schools: • Security surveillance cameras by key responders and personnel (Camera monitoring should be conducted on tiered basis based on school violence data and should be able to happen immediately when there's notification of a priority incident.) • Standardized proximity card for employees for entrance across the county • Schools supplied with high quality (800 mega hertz) communication system to coordinate with regional and central security. • Installation of Bi-Directional Antennas (BDA) per site based on the needs assessment • Provide a mechanism that would permit remote access to the cameras in the school facilities to first responders	**RATIONALE:** *A system wide alert would not be possible because the current communication system does not allow county communication.* *As identified in After Action Reports, first responders do not have reliable communications within the school buildings. This is due to signal penetration issues associated with the public safety 800MHz radio system.* *As identified in After Action Reports and other real world events, first responders rely on standard procedures for assessing the risks within schools during an emergency. WCPSS has installed security cameras within the facilities that would be a valuable resource to first responders thereby reducing the risk to responders, students and staff.*
9	There needs to be an independent audit to ensure procedures and reporting is followed.	**RATIONALE:** *Currently schools are asked to assess their own response and report to Central Office security without a system wide report. There is a need for consistent system wide reporting system.*
10	Evaluate current lock-down procedures to include direct exiting evacuation. After the evaluation, perform direct exiting evacuation/lock-down drills no less than quarterly.	**RATIONALE:** *Direct exiting evacuation is the most rapid and protective response a school can take in an active shooter incident. Evacuation is recommended by the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security as the primary response in an active shooter incident and is recommended by FEMA to be used in school shootings. See attached document (Appendix A)*
11	Provide National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) training to all employees that would be called upon during an emergency. All staff should receive ICS 100 and ICS 200. Principals, Assistant Principals and any other employee assuming a leadership role during an emergency should also take ICS 300. Staff assuming command and control at the system level should also take ICS 400. Classroom training versus on-line training is recommended. Also, elected officials should receive ICS training for elected officials (ICS 402).	**RATIONALE:** *There is no standard training curriculum for school system employees on an all hazards platform.*

12	Pursue changes in school facility requirements at the NC Building Code Council, State Legislature, or NC Department of Public Instruction to modify building requirements for schools to offer additional egress pathways from classrooms.	*RATIONALE: To make state building codes address direct egress in classrooms beyond fire safety. See attached document (Appendix B)*
13	We recommend no one other than a certified law enforcement officer within their jurisdiction to possess a firearm at any WCPSS school.	*RATIONALE: Strongly support current practices/policies that limits persons and/or employees of WCPSS to possess firearms or facsimiles thereof because they do not have the adequate or equivalent of police training and skills*
14	Standardize and strengthen implementation of crisis management response by school-based administrators, to insure universal practice of the crisis response plan including best practices for communication with parents about emergency recovery.	*RATIONALE: Emergency Operations Plan implementation varies between school buildings. This lack of uniformity complicates the work of the WCPSS Crisis Team.*
15	Create a Continuity Of Operations Plan (COOP) for the school system.	*RATIONALE: The district has no written plan to address facilities needs in the event of a catastrophic emergency in one of our schools. Businesses usually have "business continuity plans" in place to ensure a quick return to normal business operations. A matrix of resilience options—i.e. a list of all of the facilities options available to WCPSS in the event of a catastrophic emergency—would expedite the recovery process and allow the instructional program to resume as quickly as possible.*