Safety Model: History, Recent Updates, and Requests for Feedback

February 1, 2024

Strategic Plan Goals

Priority 2: Provide a Culture of Safety, Wellness, and Belonging

- CCS will support social, emotional, and physical wellness.
- CCS will foster a strong sense of community.
- CCS will promote a safe and positive learning environment.

Better Together

Strategic Plan   CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOLS   2023-28

charlottesvilleschools.org

What is Charlottesville's Model for School Safety? (2021)

Big Ideas

- Strengthening community and belonging
- Growing our mental health supports (staffing doubled in 2021)
- Adding Care and Safety Assistants (CSAs). (CSAs are state-certified School Security Officers.)
- Partnering with the community, including the police
- Security improvements such as expanding camera and access control systems
- Continuous improvement

Modifications to this plan, 2022-23

- Restructured Operations Department to create the role of Coordinator of Safety and Security
- Expanded the number and locations of CSAs – now at CHS, Buford, Walker, and LMA
- Continued physical security improvements

Initiatives Completed or Underway This School Year

- Better practices for supervising CHS hallways have yielded strong improvements
- Improved in-school suspension operations
- Enhancements to the access control system, including side door alarms
- Recent award of mental wellness grant to CCS that supports safety training
- Upcoming changes for students checking in and out of school, drop-off patterns for car riders, etc.
- Investigating next steps to continue improving physical security

Challenges of this Safety Model

Coordination with police for:

- participation in threat assessment teams
- assessment of & response to fights
- efficient reporting systems following the *Student Rights & Responsibilities*
- understanding community impacts on our schools

Three possible ideas to consider for CHS:

1) Using weapons detectors at sporting events and/or school entrances

2) Learning more about the Youth Resource Officers that connect the Cambridge (MA) Police Department with Cambridge Public Schools

3) Reconsidering the student cell phone policy at CHS (how to approach cell phones during lunch or between classes)

1st Change Under Consideration at CHS: Weapons Detectors

- Weapons detectors could be used at sporting events and/or school entrances
- Weapons detection at sporting events was recommended by Charlottesville Police Department
- Detectors are commonly found at public events and increasingly common at high schools and even middle schools (ie, Richmond Public Schools and more)

More about Possible Use of Weapons Detectors at CHS

- For athletic event use, we'd need 2 sets at a cost of approximately $40,000.
- For daily arrival at CHS, we'd need 6 sets for approximately $120,000.
- The equipment (Ceia OpenGate) is portable and good for indoor/outdoor use.
- For each detector, the need is 2 staff members and an administrator.
- Varying perspectives:
  - Do detectors relieve or generate fear?
  - Do detectors prevent incidents? How do you measure deterrence?
  - Is money better spent here or on other people, programs, or strategies?

- **Next step –survey for stakeholder feedback**
  - Do we want to begin using weapons detectors... at sporting events? ...at school entrances? ...in both situations? ...not at all?

2nd Change Under Consideration at CHS: Exploring Youth Resource Officers

- Cambridge (MA) Public Schools uses a safety model that is similar to ours, with a team of safety specialists (like our CSAs). Cambridge Schools are also supported by the Cambridge Police Department's Youth Resource Officers, with a focus on relationship-building and diverting youth from criminal justice system.
- Youth Resource Officers are not based full-time in schools but are regularly present (as well as active with youth in the community).
- Benefits of having a Youth Resource Officer regularly present on school campuses addresses some of the challenges of coordination between schools and police.

More about Exploring the Use of Youth Resource Officers

- Charlottesville City Schools is in conversation with Charlottesville Police Department for joint exploration of this possibility.
- Charlottesville Police Department has connected with Cambridge Police Department to learn more.
- If there is community interest, we will find ways for Charlottesville leaders to learn more and develop a possible plan.
- The cost of staffing this model is to be determined.

- **Next step – survey for stakeholder feedback:**
  - Do we want to further explore the role of adding Youth Resources Officers to our current safety model?

Third Change under Consideration at CHS: Re-examining student cell phone policy

- Current policy is "off and away the entire day"
  - Excellent cooperation & feedback at Buford, which has correlated with positive school culture.
  - Strong in-classroom cooperation at CHS, but phones are still seen between classes and at lunch.
  - Mixed feedback about CHS policy from stakeholders
- Decision point – maintain current policy at CHS or make a change to the policy?
  - To maintain the current policy at CHS, we would need to change enforcement (more students relinquishing phones for the day).
  - Possible change in policy would allow high school students to use phones in halls and at lunch.

More about Re-examining student cell phone policy at CHS

- Consider the "why"
  - If focus of the cell phone policy is on **learning**, then focus on phones during class ("off and away during class periods").
  - If focus is **learning, mental health, and cell phones' role in aggravating students' poor behavior choices**, then all-day "off and away the entire day" is appropriate, but CHS will need to adjust enforcement.
- **Note:** No changes are under consideration for Buford.

- **Next steps – survey for stakeholder feedback about possible changes at CHS**
  - What is the "why" that guides a student cell phone policy?
  - Should we keep (and better enforce) the current CHS policy or allow cell phone use during lunch and between class periods?

Plan for Survey and Public Engagement

1. Possible use of weapons detectors at CHS?
2. Possible exploration of adding "Youth Resource Officers" to our current safety plan at CHS?
3. Possible changes to CHS student cellphone policy?

Stakeholders:

staff, families, students, community members

Ways of Gathering Survey Feedback (opens Monday, February 5)

- ParentSquare/website
- Social media
- Media coverage
- At public events
- During Black Knight Time at CHS
- Conversational feedback gathered through student, family interactions with school and division staff

Questions, Final Thoughts

- All three of these questions will draw out varying perspectives from our stakeholders.
- Keep in mind our shared commitments to safety, community, mental health, and partnership.