

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SFISD & School Safety

June 6, 2018

4:30 p.m.

Above all else, the safety of our students and staff is our highest priority. Over the next few months, Santa Fe ISD will be working with our stakeholders to develop meaningful and action-based recommendations to keep students safe within our schools, district and the community. There is not one plan that fits all schools so the committee will focus on what is best for our students and our district.

As a result of roundtable discussions with Governor Abbott, our students, staff and parents, three important themes surfaced:

1. Making Schools Safer Places
2. Identifying Threats in Advance and Resolving Them
3. Improving Mental Health Assessments and Services

First, those who attended the roundtables agreed that the best way to deal with school violence is prevention. One way they suggested doing so was providing a greater law enforcement presence on campus. SFISD will be immediately increasing security presence on all district campuses with the addition of officers in all schools, and providing additional security guards throughout the district to assist with security monitoring such as hallways, door entries, and student supervision.

Secondly, effectively identifying and treating children with mental health issues can help prevent the loss of critical developmental, academic and emotional maturity. Early intervention can significantly help to minimize delinquent and violent youth from a future of crime. Educators, who often have the best ability to observe student behavior, need the training and tools to help them identify potential threats to themselves, their students and schools. SFISD will be reviewing resources and developing additional safety and security training for all employees.

Lastly, school counselors should have more time to devote to the mental health needs of students. In addition to academic counseling, there is a need to ensure counselors are trained to and available to focus on behavioral and mental health

issues. As a result of a state grant, SFISD will be immediately adding additional counselors to the high school staff in order to focus on behavioral and mental health concerns.

The District has initiated a Santa Fe Strong Safety and Security Committee made up of various stakeholders to research possible solutions to ensure a safe learning environment for students and staff. We appreciate the outpouring of interest and support to be a voice involved in this process to strengthen student safety in our schools. The District intends to remain transparent with our community commitment to keep you informed. As we move forward, we will offer an opportunity for our community to respond to recommendations made by the committee through our interactive website portal.

Our Santa Fe Strong Safety and Security Committee will be comprised of parents representing the entire district from elementary to high school, a member from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, a member representing mental health/counseling, a faith based leader from our Ministerial Alliance, members representing students, teachers and staff, a member from the city or county emergency management team, members of our SFISD Police Department, members of our Board of Trustees, and the Superintendent of Schools.

The purpose of this committee will be to evaluate and make recommendations on all aspects of school, student and staff safety. For example, consideration of but not limited to, the use of metal detectors, clear backpacks, easier access for students to appropriate levels of mental health services, reviewing and recommendations regarding the student code of conduct and dress code, utilizing social media monitoring tools to investigate potential threats, reviewing communication protocols in cases of emergency, and other safety measures as applicable and practical.

Interested individuals may contact Jennifer Smith, with the Santa Fe ISD Police Department, at jennifer.smith@sfisd.org. The deadline will be Wednesday, June 13, 2018, by noon. Members selected for the committee will be notified prior to the first meeting which will be held on Tuesday, June 19, 2018, from 5:00-6:30 p.m. in Training Room 2 at the Elizabeth Yaws Cowan Education Center located at 4133 Warpath in Santa Fe. Future meeting dates will be determined by the Committee. All of those who expressed an interest in serving on the committee

will be able to provide feedback to recommendations made by the committee through our interactive web portal.

The safety of the students, staff and community will continue to be the highest priority in Santa Fe ISD.

Patti Hanssard,
Asst. Supt. For HR/PR