

Grosse Pointe Public School System Security Assessment

Overview

The following actions were completed to develop information documented in this preliminary assessment.

- Interviews were performed with key staff members in charge of policy administration and day-to-day operations.
- A visual walk-through of some facilities was performed with administrative and faculty personnel to assess the overall basic physical security.

This assessment was completed solely based on threats of active violence in schools, and was focused on general administrative and student security during visitor contacts at the main office entrances. A more detailed assessment is needed to focus on the overall broad building security issues and to design a plan that creates consistent overall safety throughout the entire school system.

Please note that this report has been completed at the request of Dr. Gary C. Niehaus and approved by the Board of Education for the Grosse Pointe Public School System.

Physical Security

School violence is a concern for many organizations because educational buildings provide unique security challenges to building managers. In most cases, odds are low that an active violence event may occur at an administrative office or within a school building. Although this may be a low-frequency event, it doesn't mean that the district shouldn't prepare and plan for an emergency to ensure staff and students are safe. Threats may come in different forms, such as a disgruntled student, employee, or parent, or a domestic violence situation. In all cases, security and planning is the first step in preparing for an emergency crisis situation in our schools.

The recommendations in this report are made after careful consideration. Implementing some or all of the recommendations will not guarantee that a security event will be prevented; however, implementing recommendations made in this report *may* prevent or reduce the severity of the threat.

Beginning in August of 2015, under the direction of Dr. Gary C. Niehaus and the guidance and coordination of Deputy Superintendent Chris Fenton and Manager of Buildings and Grounds Richard VanGorder, Compliance One was chosen as the security consulting firm to ensure that the students, faculty, and staff of the Grosse Pointe Public School System were provided with a safe and secure learning environment.

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Since August of 2015, and throughout the remainder of 2016, Grosse Pointe Administration is committed to working alongside Compliance One to ensure this mission is accomplished.

Projects completed as of this date include:

- 1) Development of the Emergency Operations Plan (E.O.P.) which encompasses all required State and Federal mandates. This document took several months of collaboration between school administrators, public safety officials, emergency managers, parent and teacher organizations, the Board of Education, and County and State government officials.
- 2) Development of a Critical Incident Response Guide (flip chart) for faculty and staff to refer to in the event of an emergency. These response guides will be placed in each classroom assuring the safety of students and staff, should a catastrophic event take place.
- 3) Implementation of a district-wide Bomb Threat Assessment and Procedures document developed from numerous tabletop conversations with high school administrative staff, district staff, public safety officials, and State and Federal guidelines.
- 4) Planning, procedures, and tabletop scenarios all designed to assist with the full-scale evacuation/re-unification drills of both high schools to take place in the spring of 2016.
- 5) A renewed partnership with all the public safety departments within the school district. All public safety departments have been working in conjunction with the Grosse Pointe Public School System in the development of these policies and procedures, and response guidelines if a tragic event were to take place in the district. Both the Grosse Pointe Public School System and the public safety entities are committed to the safety of our children and staff.

In most cases, Grosse Pointe Public School System's buildings are mainly brick-constructed with administrative offices and classrooms. In some cases, the buildings have multi-levels. Significant challenges based on the design and current layout of the administrative offices and public entrances to many of the schools may cause risk to students, faculty, or staff attempting to shelter or evacuate during a violent crisis situation.

School Entrances

During the walk-through assessments of the administrative areas of the schools, it was identified that, in most cases, there was a lack of security and operational consistency between buildings. In many cases, visitors enter through sections of the buildings that require them to travel a lengthy distance through student common areas before being greeted by a staff member. Compliance One encountered some unlocked doors that allowed our staff to potentially interact with Grosse Pointe Public School System students without the knowledge of staff. In some cases, it was confusing how to get to administrative offices within the building, and twice Compliance One staff members were given direction by students. The lack of GPPSS staff being able to create a barrier between unwanted visitors and students creates a significant security concern.

*Overall Assessment Rating: **Extremely Vulnerable***

Recommendations:

- Redesign the visitor entrances in all schools except North High School. Create a secure entry area that would allow the ability for GPPSS staff safety and student separation from common visitor check-in areas. Direct all visitors to enter through one main entrance and sign in at the main office. Allow GPPSS staff the ability to refuse entry to anyone electronically into the secure office area or student hallways.
- Install security doors with shatter-resistant glass between the visitor and staff greeting area. This will increase GPPSS staff's ability to control access to unwanted visitors.
- Install cameras in multiple areas of the administrative offices including, but not limited to, ingress/egress access points to all visitors, students, faculty/staff, and delivery areas. Camera monitors should be installed in key employee areas such as administrative common areas, administrative offices, and employee lounges.
- Install an access control system on key ingress/egress doors in the visitor and administrative offices.
- Install an alarm system separate from the fire alarm. This alarm would provide a unique sound that would alert staff to an interior lockdown in the case a verbal announcement cannot be made. This alarm should have the ability to be activated in the main administrative offices and other key parts of the building.

Open-Campus Lunch (High Schools)

During our assessments, the open campus lunches were evaluated based on a potential security emergency. These free-movement lunch periods cause an immediate concern for student tracking and the school's accountability if an emergency event occurred.

*Overall Assessment Rating: **Extremely Vulnerable***

Recommendations:

- End all open-campus lunch periods that allow students to leave the campus.
- Establish strict guidelines regarding student tracking when leaving school buildings and update this information immediately in the Grosse Pointe Public School System attendance database to be available in real-time in the event of a crisis.
- Track all student and staff vehicles by requiring a vehicle registration process that will allow Grosse Pointe Public School System administration to create a database of vehicles that have permission to be in assigned parking areas.

Additional Areas of Concern

Although initial safety evaluations were completed based on requests specifically focusing on school entrances, staff visitor interaction, and student safety during lunch activity at the high schools, preliminary observations of several other areas of the buildings and practices were concerning. Additional information will need to be collected to make proper recommendations, but based on the preliminary observations, the overall ratings are as follows:

General Policies and Procedures:

*Overall Assessment Rating: **Extremely Vulnerable***

Upon initial review of the policies and procedures throughout the school district, Compliance One found there was no consistency or standards to which the entire district adheres. Compliance One found that mandatory State and Federal policies and procedures were not in place or practiced as required by law. Compliance One also found that emergency response procedures for students, faculty, and staff were either outdated or missing entirely, leaving the district extremely vulnerable in the event of a crisis at any and all locations.

Corrective Action:

Compliance One is currently in the process of completing the necessary documents to fulfill these requirements bringing Grosse Pointe Public School System into compliance as required.

De-escalation and Crisis Intervention for external threats

Overall Assessment Rating: *Extremely Vulnerable*

Recommendations:

- All faculty and staff receive training on de-escalation techniques and crisis intervention as GPPSS special education staff currently are, allowing all staff to recognize and react to behavior as trained, thereby enhancing the security of the school environment.
- No current policies or procedures appeared to be in place at the time of our assessment for external threats; however, Compliance One is in the process of writing the policies and procedures to address these types of crisis.

Surveillance Cameras and Monitors

Overall Assessment Rating: *Extremely Vulnerable*

As mentioned above, security cameras are very limited throughout the entire district with the majority being at the two high schools, although not adequate to meet the true needs of a safe and secure environment. Compliance One found that several of these cameras were in dire need of upgrading from analog to digital technology, and that there were not nearly enough cameras throughout the school to efficiently secure the environment. Compliance One was made aware of the lack of software tracking capabilities, and lack of staff member training in the use of the camera technology.

Recommendations:

- Equip all schools with the latest security camera technology to include facial recognition cameras.
- Train all office staff and administration in the use and capabilities of the new system and how to assist law enforcement by capturing images or events in any type of incident that would require further investigation.
- Ensure that the new technology vendor properly place all cameras to achieve these desired outcomes.
- Develop policies and procedures to assist with implementation and use of the camera system, and liabilities that may coincide with improper use of the system.

Security Personnel

*Overall Assessment Rating: **Vulnerable***

Security personnel are present in one of the high schools and hall monitors are utilized in the other high school. Compliance One observed no other security personnel in the middle or elementary schools.

Recommendations:

- There should be consistency and a standardization of policies and procedures among the type of security personnel and their practices in the school district. The two high schools should operate off the same set of guidelines to assure equal and fair treatment of all students, faculty, and staff.
- The best practice would be for the district and law enforcement to develop a partnership agreement placing a dedicated school resource officer (SRO) at a minimum in each high school, and preferably the middle schools. If budget restraints prohibit this, a dedicated SRO could split his or her time between the middle schools. This is a proven method to deter crime and to bridge the gap between youth and law enforcement in the community they serve.

Perimeter Security

*Overall Assessment Rating: **Vulnerable***

Although many of the schools have playground and athletic field perimeter fencing, several other areas did not, or the integrity of the fencing was compromised with several open gates. Several parking areas and access to the rear of many buildings were open to any type of vehicular traffic. Some schools had overgrown shrubs or bushes and even access to rooftops. All of our assessments were conducted during the day, so it is unknown on evening/nighttime lighting capabilities.

Recommendations:

- Enclose all schools with perimeter fencing, especially where visibility is obscured from the street areas or lighting is poor.
- Ensure all gates remain locked during school hours.
- Install gates at all access drives with card-activated technology for staff and preferred vendors.
- Trim and/or remove overgrown large bushes to eliminate blind spots or hiding areas.

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- Ensure exterior is well illuminated in low light conditions (LED or sodium lights).

Classrooms

*Overall Assessment Rating: **Vulnerable***

The district has many challenges with the buildings and classrooms based on the age and construction materials used; however, there are solutions to improve the current types of doors and locking devices that are currently in place today. Compliance One observed that almost all classroom doors had to be secured by teachers utilizing a key from the outside of their classroom; they were unable to secure it from the inside in an emergency situation. Compliance One also observed that several of these doors had windows that could easily be shattered by an intruder and access to the room would be simple.

Recommendations:

- Upgrade doors and locking devices.
- Cover existing windows with a ballistic film to withstand blunt force and access to the room allowing emergency responders critical time to address the threat at hand.
- Purchase one of several barricading devices available to restrict that will keep the intruder from accessing the room.

Summary

In every contact with individuals at all schools within the Grosse Pointe Public School System, it was immediately clear that every staff member and administrator was personally invested in the security of the students.

We were impressed by the caring and protective nature of each staff member. They were all committed to protecting every student from grades K through 12. When asked about job satisfaction, staff responses were overwhelmingly positive. When asked about overall security, again, responses were positive with a few comments regarding changes and updates. It quickly appeared to our assessment team that Grosse Pointe Public School System employees are happy with their jobs and have some reasonable security requests. We find that some of those requests are valid and some even pose significant security risks to students during a crisis event. We are committed to working with the Grosse Pointe Public School System in improving school safety district-wide.

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We would like to recognize the Board of Education and Dr. Gary C. Niehaus for taking the necessary steps to better protect the children of the Grosse Pointe Public School System. I would also like to thank Chris Fenton, Rich VanGorder, and all of the Public Safety Chiefs and Directors for their effort and commitment. Without the help of these individuals, none of this would have been possible.

Compliance One looks forward to completing a full assessment to create a district-wide plan to update the security at each of the Grosse Pointe Public School System buildings.

Respectfully yours,

Joe Humphries
Project Manager
Compliance One

