

Delaware Schools Start Year with Comprehensive School Safety Plans in Place

Red Clay School Officials Join Governor to Celebrate School Safety Milestone

Newport, DE – Having worked with the General Assembly to make school safety improvements a top priority of the state, Governor Jack Markell recognized 2015-2016 as the first school year in which every Delaware public school is using a comprehensive safety plan to prepare for potential emergency situations, ranging from armed intruders to natural disasters.

Joined by Richey Elementary School principal Dotty Johnson, Red Clay School District Superintendent Merv Daugherty, Red Clay Public Safety Director Brian Moore, and Delaware Capitol Police Chief John Horsman, the Governor also highlighted new infrastructure upgrades made to enhance safety at Richey Elementary School. In 2012, Governor Markell signed the [Omnibus School Safety Act](#), making Delaware the first state in the country to establish a formal statewide framework for comprehensive school safety plans, which brings all public schools under one common safety protocol.

“We all want to provide a safe and secure learning environment for our children and we have a sacred responsibility to be ready to respond when anything threatens it,” Governor Jack Markell said. “The advances made by our schools over the past few years means they are better prepared than ever before for a wide range of emergency scenarios.”

Superintendent Daugherty, Director Moore and Principal Johnson all touted the benefits of the school safety planning program and emphasized the importance of the safety initiatives implemented in district schools. At Richey Elementary, door

locks and perimeter cameras were installed. The school also reconfigured its lobby to prevent direct entry into the school. All visitors are now directed into the school main office to gain access to the school interior. In addition, Red Clay has assigned a School Resource Officer or Constable to each of its schools.

“Red Clay parents trust us to keep their students safe and the tools provided through the Comprehensive School Safety Planning (CSSP) program are helping us do just that.” Daugherty said. “Having a comprehensive school safety plan that addresses various emergencies allows school officials to start the year focusing on what’s most important—educating its students.”

The Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) Capitol Police is charged with overseeing statewide comprehensive school safety planning. In 2012, DSHS implemented the Emergency Response Information Portal (ERIP), a web-based solution that serves as a central repository for all Delaware public and charter school safety plans. ERIP not only provides the tools and technology to help schools with the school safety planning process, but also contains numerous other school safety resources including threat assessments and online video courses.

In the past school year, CSSP Director Wendy Hudson worked with the school districts to make certain its schools met the State standards outlined in the Omnibus School Safety Act. Last fall [Governor Markell strengthened this Act](#), accelerating the timetable for compliance and requiring all public and charter schools to complete two intruder drills and one tabletop exercise annually in addition to its school safety plan.

“The Red Clay School District and administrators like Mrs. Johnson, who are committed to the school safety planning process, make our work easier. They have embraced school

safety from the start and remained vigilant,” Chief Horsman said. “Our children spend the majority of their day in school and it is imperative we work with administrators and provide them the tools needed to ensure the safety our students.”

As the school safety planning program continues to thrive, the next phase Red Clay started was making sure the first responders can have easier access to critical information before and during an incident.

“In Red Clay we have already begun a trial initiative with our colleagues at the State Police Troop 6, creating accounts for every trooper in the area so that they can have access to these fantastic tools as well,” Moore said. “In reality anytime there is an emergency the school district cannot respond in a silo, but the entire emergency response community has to work together to insure the safety of the school and students.”

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