

For Senate and House Education Committee

Arkansas School Safety Commission Recommendations (2019)

By: Dr. Cheryl May

Mental Health and Prevention Subcommittee

- Recommendation 1:
Every school district should conduct school climate surveys across all campuses, and develop and implement an action plan based on the findings of the school climate survey.
- Recommendation 2:
All school districts should implement a positive climate program that deters bullying behaviors, and promotes social-emotional learning and positive peer relationships.
- Recommendation 3:
All school districts should provide access to training in Youth Mental Health First Aid for all personnel who interact with students. Additional school personnel training may include: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Trauma-Informed Schools, Drug-Endangered Children, and Social-Emotional Learning.
- Recommendation 4:
All school districts should establish a behavioral threat assessment team and process.
- Recommendation 5:
The Arkansas Department of Education should review roles and responsibilities of school counselors to provide increased time with students for provision of counseling and social-emotional learning, as well as referral to community resources as appropriate.
- Recommendation 6:
A coordinated crisis response team should be developed to mitigate the emotional impact of any traumatic event that impacts a district.

Law Enforcement and Security Subcommittee

- Recommendation 1:
No campus should ever be without an armed presence when staff and children are attending class or a major extra-curricular activity.

- Recommendation 2:
If financially practicable, schools should ideally have at least one SRO for each campus.
- Recommendation 3:
School districts should execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with their partnering law enforcement agency that identifies the roles and responsibilities of SROs and other critical elements.
- Recommendation 4:
SROs whose primary assignment is within the schools should receive specialized training.
- Recommendation 5:
If a school district authorizes the use of the CSSO program, that policies, protocols, training, and selection go above the minimum standards required, to include standard psychological exams, random drug screening, extensive firearms handling training, and regular training with law enforcement.
- Recommendation 6:
Schools should consider strategies that layer and build redundancy for optimal security.
- Recommendation 7:
Arkansas's Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training (CLEST) should study the feasibility of school districts being allowed to establish their own law enforcement agencies.

Audits, Emergency Operation Plans and Drills Subcommittee

- Recommendation 1:
All districts should be required to form District Safety and Security Teams.
- Recommendation 2:
Each campus should also designate one current staff member as a School Safety Coordinator.
- Recommendation 3:
The ADE's Safe Schools Committee membership should be expanded.

- Recommendation 4:
Schools should modify their fire drills to include additional time for the teacher to evaluate the situation by looking, listening and observing prior to evacuating their classrooms.
- Recommendation 5:
Comprehensive school safety assessments should be required to be conducted every three years and reviewed by the school board and school administration.
- Recommendation 6:
School nurses and staff should be trained in efforts that enhance the emergency medical response within schools.

Intelligence and Communications Subcommittee

- Recommendation 1:
Each school district should support, establish, and maintain a comprehensive, common communication plan to be utilized by school officials, students, parents, law enforcement, and other stakeholders.
- Recommendation 2:
School districts should have systems that enable direct communication with local law enforcement.
- Recommendation 3:
School districts, in collaboration with local and other law enforcement agencies, should implement and expand strategies to promote reporting, to include anonymous reporting, of suspicious activity/behavior and threats.
- Recommendation 4:
Students, staff, and parents should be educated on how to recognize and report signs of at-risk behavior and potential threats.
- Recommendation 5:
An analysis should be conducted to determine how the Arkansas State Fusion Center (ASFC) could be more effectively utilized to receive and disseminate information pertaining to threats against schools. In addition, the ASFC could provide timely and relevant information to schools and other appropriate entities pertaining to school safety.

Physical Security Subcommittee

- Recommendation 1:
State agencies should work with the federal Readiness and Emergency Management (REMS) for Schools Center Training Assistance Office, to develop a customized, state-level school bus safety initiative for use by districts, schools, and transportation offices.
- Recommendation 2:
State leaders should engage the Arkansas congressional delegation and other federal partners to encourage the U.S. Department of Education to allow Title IV formula block grants to include use by schools for infrastructure improvements to support safe and healthy schools, including physical security remedies.
- Recommendation 3:
Districts should create an online facility profile within a panic button alert system for each new campus or facility in the district and conduct annual reviews to update facility profiles where needed.
- Recommendation 4:
Districts should review and assess the efficacy of upgrading any old style "crash bar" exterior door egress hardware with the newer "touch bar" type exit devices.
- Recommendation 5:
Prior to installation or contracting to installation of temporary door barricade devices designed to preclude intruders from entering any classroom or learning space of a school building, information pertaining to the project should be uploaded into DPSAFT's web-based project submission tool for review.
- Recommendation 6:
The state's Academic Facilities Partnership Program should be revised to allow districts to submit eligible campus safety and security upgrade projects for state financial assistance.