



Arlington
Public
Schools

SECURITY & SAFETY

BRIEFING PAPER

JUNE 2017





SECURITY & SAFETY

At Arlington Public Schools (APS) our mission is to provide a safe and secure learning environment. Students learn best and achieve their fullest potential when they learn in an environment where they are physically, socially, and emotionally safe. School security and safety supports Goal Four of our Strategic Plan, to provide optimal learning environments that support and enhance teaching and learning, and Goal Five, to meet the needs of the whole child.

Efforts to improve school safety, school environment, teaching and learning are not separate efforts but a collaborative effort undertaken by all staff. Creating a safe learning environment is a critical component in educating children to realize their full potential and achieve success. We strive to make students and staff as secure as possible in our schools in a number of ways, many of which are highlighted in this briefing paper.

School Resource Officers

The Arlington County Police Department assigns School Resource Officers (SROs) to our schools. The SRO Unit currently comprises a lieutenant, a sergeant, and thirteen officers. One SRO is assigned to each high school and each middle school; the remaining officers cover the elementary schools.

SROs are specifically trained to perform their duties in a school setting. They are expected to be go beyond the typical role of a law enforcement officer to engage students in law-related topics and to be role models to them. SROs improve the way police officers are perceived by students and the community.

Problem solving in schools often requires SROs to coordinate with staff, students, parents, mental health professionals and community-based stakeholders. SROs frequently assist in resolving problems that are not necessarily violations of the law, such as bullying and disorderly behavior.

First Responder Communications

The concrete, steel, insulation and low emissivity coatings on window glass in our newer schools and renovated older schools block radio signals and impair first responder radio communications. APS has collaborated with Arlington County to install Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS) and Bi-Directional Amplifiers (BDA) in our schools. These systems support the Arlington County First Responder Network to ensure that police and fire radios will operate throughout the schools.

Current work on these systems falls into three categories: audits of existing systems to insure operability and compliance; installation of new systems at new or renovated schools; and evaluation of other schools to identify and address radio communications issues.

Audits of existing DAS/BDA systems at Washington-Lee, and Yorktown were recently conducted and issues addressed. The audit of the system at Wakefield will occur during the summer of 2017.

New systems have been installed during construction at Ashlawn, Discovery, McKinley and Abingdon, and will be installed during construction at the new middle school at the Stratford site, the new school on the Wilson site, and the new elementary school on the Jefferson site.

New systems were recently installed at Kenmore and Williamsburg and a new system will be installed at Gunston later this year. A new system will be installed at Jefferson and connected to the system at the new elementary school on the site.

School Bus Stop Arm Cameras

Many drivers fail to stop when school buses are loading or unloading students, thus endangering our students. The Code of Virginia enables localities to install and operate a video-monitoring system on its school buses to record violators. In 2015, APS contracted with a vendor to install cameras on 18 buses through a revenue sharing agreement at no expense to APS.



The stop-arm cameras automatically capture data on all violating vehicles. After initial review by the vendor the data is forwarded to and reviewed by the Arlington County Police Department. If a violation is approved, a Summons is issued and mailed to the vehicle's registered owner. The fine for the violation is \$250 and with no points assessed.

Since October 3, 2016 the Arlington County Police Department has approved over three hundred and fifty violations. This has resulted in fine revenue of over \$70,000 with net revenue to APS of approximately \$26,500.

School Bus Cameras

Cameras on the interior of school buses promote student safety, prevent misconduct, protect drivers from fraudulent claims, enforce good driving practices, and deter vandalism. Cameras also provide a record of bullying and other incidents, of which drivers are not often aware.

APS currently operates over 140 school buses each day. In 2014 less than 40% of the buses had at least one camera on the interior of the bus. Today, through a combination of new bus purchases and retrofits all buses has at least one interior camera. New buses have a multi-camera system to improve coverage of the bus interior.

Security Cameras

Security cameras in and around schools help make schools safer by acting as a deterrent to theft, vandalism, altercations, intruders and, bullying and providing administrators with a way to investigate such incidents.

Since 2015 over 95% of the existing security cameras at schools have been replaced with upgraded models and the number of cameras has been substantially increased at many schools, funded in part through state school security grants. Security cameras stream video back to the server where it is recorded and stored for approximately ten days. SROs can monitor cameras live or view stored video of an incident.

The security cameras are IP-based so that first responders at the Arlington County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) have real-time access to video feeds in times of emergency. APS is one of the first school divisions in the region to have this capability.



Radio Communications

Over the last two years as part of an ongoing plan radios at several schools have been upgraded from VHF to UHF to improve communications between staff in emergencies. The UHF radios are able to utilize the DAS/BDA systems installed in many schools and allow school staff to communicate directly with first responders.

School Floor Plans

APS continues to update school floor plans into a uniform format with large format room and door numbers for rapid reference by police and fire responders. The school plans are being made available on the Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) in first responder vehicles to expedite response to incidents at a school. The floor plans are also being integrated with the video servers at schools to provide a view of the floor plan, with camera locations, and links to the cameras for use by the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center.

Visitor Management

Keeping schools safe is an essential part of a healthy learning environment for both students and teachers. Today at most APS schools, visitors and contractors are asked to sign a paper visitor log upon check-in or type their information into a desktop computer that produces a name tag.

At Discovery, Key, and Randolph APS is now piloting the same Visitor Management System (VMS) that Fairfax County Public Schools is deploying division-wide. The VMS at these three APS schools is configured to operate with no requirement that parents or visiting APS staff produce some form of ID to check in. In the future the VMS may be enabled to check visitor's names on lists and databases of individuals that are barred from entering school property.

The goal of the VMS is not to discourage parents from visiting their children's schools, rather it is to enhance the safety and security of students and staff by knowing who is in the school and limiting access to those who might pose a threat.

School Safety Inspection Checklist

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) requires all public schools to complete the DCJS School Safety Checklist every three years. The checklist requires a large number of items related to school safety and security to be documented. The checklist was last completed in 2014 and will be completed again this summer.

Perimeter Security / Access Control

Over the last year building perimeter security has been improved and updated at many schools by replacing hardware and/or on exterior doors to include high security keyways. This reduces the number of master keys issued and improves security and accountability by allowing controlled use of access cards by staff.

MOVING FORWARD

In recent years, APS has worked in a number of ways to improve safety and security at schools. We have increased collaboration with County agencies as well as our use of technology to make our schools and community members safer. These improvements are ongoing and we will continue to explore these and other options to further improve school security throughout APS. While technology has enabled substantial improvements to safety and security, we recognize that the best school security continues to come from a well-trained and highly alert staff and student body. Therefore, we will continue to support the entire APS community so they can recognize and feel empowered to report strangers and rumors in their school and to report someone who may pose a threat.