



## Information from Local School Districts Legislative Council School Safety Committee July 2008

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### **Kettle Moraine School District**

School safety is a growing concern among our parents and staff. It is a constant consideration as an administrator. Our buildings were not built with the safety concerns of today in mind and there are adjustments that need to be made.

This past year I implemented a fast response auto-dial phone messaging system to communicate school safety messages in a responsive manner. This has been very popular with our parents, but it comes at an expense to other areas of the operating budget and it is an ongoing expense.

We have reallocated maintenance money to equip two of elementary schools with monitored locked entries. There are four other buildings that we would like to equip as well. We have monitoring cameras in our high school and we want to install them in our middle school to meet the needs there.

Our high school resource officer is in our building 2-3 hours a day (.3 FTE) and the cost of his services is increasing next year. We would love to have a full-time resource officer as our neighboring high schools do, but we would need to eliminate other positions in order to make this happen.

We want to provide safe transportation. Our buses are equipped with the housing for cameras, but we rotate the cameras we have between buses because of the expense in equipping all buses. We would like to conduct preparedness drills with our local community responders, but serving 10 municipalities complicates the staging of these rehearsals and increases the expense.

During a winter storm we lost power to our buildings during a lunch hour. We learned that we need a back-up generator to ensure that our communication with parents and our food services for our students are provided.

I have no doubt that our community wants safe schools. I also know that the community wants quality schools. They don't want to have to choose between the two and they don't want administration making that choice for them. To reduce staff, technology or instructional materials in order to address safety concerns is controversial at best. Our residents want safety to

be automatic. They want communication to be instantaneous. Flexibility in funding school safety only makes sense for our students and staff.

Submitted by: Patricia Deklotz, School District Administrator

### **Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District**

At Middleton High School, personnel have been added at the entrance to check in visitors and monitor the halls at a cost of approximately \$80,000.

At West Middleton Elementary School, the entrance was reconfigures to require visitors to go through the office before getting into the school at a cost of approximately \$35,000.

The district's share of the police liaison program with Middleton and Cross Plains for 2008-09 is \$82,762.

The board's Long-Range Planning Committee is charged with coming up with an assessment of the district's safety and security needs in all the schools. All of the needs and improvements identified in the recent school safety and security assessment totaled \$5,676,600. The items identified as having the highest priority totaled \$3,466,300.

The board also surveyed the committee, which indicates support for a referendum to increase school safety. Whether a referendum will actually pass remains to be seen, but the board is looking into asking for \$3.5 million to fund the highest priority items.

Submitted by: Ellen Lindgren, School Board President

### **Barron School District**

The Barron Area School District has been squeezed for several years with a budget system where revenue doesn't match the increases in expenses needed to maintain operations from year to year. To maintain status quo each year, it has required us to find \$400,000 to \$600,000 in reductions each year from many areas. Two years ago we were forced to seek referendum approval for operational purposes to exceed the revenue cap by \$790,000. This provided temporary relief, but the reductions continue as the revenue increase doesn't come close to matching the consumer expense increase just to maintain operations. For 2008-09, we have a deficit budget.

Security and school safety have eroded during this budget squeeze over the last 10 years. Instead of cutting instructional programs or going to large class sizes to balance our budget, we have put maintenance of school building items and security maintenance on the back burner. We no longer could afford a school-police liaison officer. The position was discontinued as of Jan. 1, 2008. We have 30 security cameras in three school buildings that monitor our hallways and surrounding areas with only a few in working condition. The remainder no longer work and

we haven't had the money to replace those cameras. We also want to enhance our door security with electronic locks and a student ID system, but are unable to do this with no budgeted funds available.

I understand schools are in urgent need of additional funds in many areas and there are several places we could use additional funds. Security being one of them, and one that takes on a primary level of importance when history has shown it is too late. When the need for security and school safety becomes extremely important and evident is typically after a school tragedy happens. I'm not looking to create a security fortress, but a public school building that has parents and their children feel safe and secure. I believe that one-fourth of 1 percent of our annual budget allocated for safety and security would handle our needs, especially with the ability to carry this amount over to handle larger project costs.

Submitted by: Monti Hallberg, District Administrator

### **Mellen School District**

I am a Mellen School Board Member and part of our district's Safety and Security Committee. I am also a retired police officer from California and familiar with stricter school security and closed campuses. I was surprised when I moved to Mellen to find the school had an open door policy and anyone could enter through any doors at anytime of the day. Because of the media covered events that have taken place in the last two years within schools, the Administration sees the need to change its open policy.

Our school has been fortunate not to have any serious problems like those in so many schools across Wisconsin, and the nation for that matter. We have been forced to "get with the times" after serious death threats were made against teachers and support staff at the Park Falls School and the bomb threats at the Mercer school. But, like most schools in Wisconsin we are dealing with lower enrollment and higher operating expenses, and not enough state and federal funding.

The Mellen public school, like so many other small schools, was built in 1910 with the mind-set of the era. There was no concern for violence within our schools. Through the years this small community has continued with the same mind-set of innocence that nothing tragic could ever happen in a small, family-oriented community such as ours.

Unfortunately times have changed and violence has become an increasing uncertainty. School shootings, child abductions, and child custody battles have heightened community consciousness of school safety. Per the National Center of Education Statistics, there has been 35 school associated violent deaths in elementary and secondary schools, 14 homicides and 3 suicides of children within schools across the nation from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006. As stated in the FBI'S Uniform Crime report, "Although statistically schools are relatively safe places, the recurrent episodes of school shootings and the larger backdrop of youth violence is cause for concern."

The Mellen School District is faced with replacing nearly all the doors, implementing a locked door policy, adding exit alarms, placing observation cameras to monitor entrances/exits along

with facility and technology upgrades to enhance our school's safety and security. The Mellen School Board has put into action a plan that will help prevent the opportunity for the deadly incident like those that have occurred in the Weston School District and the two attempt child abductions near Greenfield Wisconsin.

The Mellen School Board wants to be proactive to help prevent violent incidents or child abductions like those occurring in so many other school districts in rural America. The school board has recognized the importance of this security plan, but due to financial constraints schools are faced with, they have been restricted in providing the necessary funds to fully satisfy the financial support necessary to keep our school the safest it can be.

Through our Safety and Security Committee, we are currently seeking donations and completing grants to raise the proposed \$21,000 that would start our strategic plan into action. I have spent hundreds of hours researching school safety policies and procedure, writing letters and contacting individuals, and companies to request donations. I have been surprised by a consistent response that this should be a state funding matter, not for the individuals and businesses of the community. However, the community is aware of the importance of the facility and technological upgrades and the responsibility that we all share to ensure the safety of our children.

Our school and community have been given a dose of reality with what appears to have been a significant increase of school violence in the last few years. The Ashland School District has contracted for a police officer to be on campus during school hours and have implemented a locked door policy and made facility upgrades. The Park Falls School District did the same after several teachers had received death threats against them and their family members. The Mercer School District received bomb threats and took precautions to prevent an incident. The Mellen School District has been forced to take action to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

Our Building and Grounds personnel, teachers and support staff have also spent hundreds of hours for the last year working with the Safety and Security Committee to improve the safety of the students, staff and community. Not to mention the hours the Building and Grounds staff will spend installing and maintaining the upgrades we hope to make in the next year if funds are raised. The administration has met with the teaching and support staff to discuss the new implementation of policies and procedures and several staff members feel this is long overdue.

The Mellen School District will start the 2008 - 2009 school year with a deficit of more than \$100,000. We are fighting to maintain curriculum and core classes that will assist our children in being globally competitive. We have a responsibility to ensure each school has what it needs to provide a safe environment for our children. It is unfortunate that already stretched school budgets are being forced to choose between staffing, curriculum and safety.

I would like to see changes made and assistance given by the state and federal government, not only as a parent, but as a school board member.

Submitted by: Ronnie Rossberger, Mellen School Board