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School Safety Task Force

The topic of school safety is once again at the forefront of our community and nation. The recent tragic school shooting in Parkland, Florida, have caused us to reexamine our safety protocols and the mental health supports we have in place for students. To that end, we have convened a School Safety Task Force. The Clarence Board of Education has charged the Task Force with examining the elements of the existing school safety plans along with best safety and mental health practices across the region in order to determine what changes to the existing plans should be considered. The Task Force held its first meeting on March 19th and it will meet monthly in order to generate recommendations that the Board of Education will consider at their June 11th meeting.

The response to the call for Task Force volunteers was overwhelming, with over eighty community members, faculty and staff expressing an interest. In order to maximize efficiency, we limited the size of the committee to thirty members. Participants chosen for the Task Force includes parents from all six schools, individuals who work in law enforcement, homeland security, the security field, teachers, support staff, administrators, and interested community members.

At the first meeting, the Task Force was provided with a review of all the safety plan elements and initiatives that have been put into place over the past ten years. There are a number of safety items that are mandated by New York State, such as district and building safety plans, fire and lockdown drills, and reporting of violent incidents, harassment, and discrimination. In addition, the District has added numerous elements, including video surveillance cameras, intruder door locks, enhanced entry procedures, scannable identification badges, the ability to record phone calls, additional school psychologists, and a School Resource Officer.

The Task Force will spend the remainder of the meetings discussing ideas for improving school safety and support for student mental health issues. The ideas are being generated by Task Force members, community members, faculty and staff. We have also gathered data from other school districts in the region on the safety and mental health elements they have in place, as well as the staffing ratios for counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other pupil personnel staff.

Our community can follow the work of the Task Force by visiting our dedicated web page at <http://clarenceschools.org/domain/875>, where we will post meeting agendas and supporting documentation. We encourage the community to submit suggestions on how we can improve our school safety plans.