



Dorchester County  
Public Schools  
Every Child A Success!

# SUPERINTENDENT'S PRESS RELEASE

W. David Bromwell, Superintendent

DATE: June 3, 2022

## An Open Letter to the Dorchester County Public Schools Community

Dear Dorchester students, staff, parents, community:

In the aftermath of the Uvalde, Texas school shooting, I feel it is very important that I share what Dorchester County Public Schools (DCPS) is doing to protect our children by providing an update on security measures presently in place, as well as our plans to enhance safety within our schools for our children and staff.

The goal within DCPS is to implement a culture of school safety districtwide. This culture encompasses students, parents, DCPS staff, local law enforcement and the community and is based on enhanced communication, relationship building, and the trust of all parties. With the recent tragedy in Texas, safety is now in the forefront of the minds of students, staff, parents, and community. Here is what has taken place within DCPS over the last three years to enhance our security measures at our schools and Central Office.

- All DCPS staff and students are “ALICE” trained. ALICE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate. We became a fully committed ALICE district in 2019. We continue to train, review, and enhance these procedures each school year.
- Through partnerships with the Dorchester County Sheriff’s Office and Cambridge Police Department, who train within our schools during off hours to be prepared in case such a tragic emergency should occur, officers stand ready to assist with an immediate response. Our local law enforcement groups are trained in ALICE and support its philosophy.
- DCPS continues to use state guidance with training by the Maryland Center for School Safety.
- There is an emphasis on the mental health and well-being of our students and staff. Each school has a mental health team. Our commitment to providing interventions and supports include the implementation of mindfulness practices, restorative practices, and learning social skills. For students struggling with intense mental health needs, we have a partnership with ten mental health providers where students can be referred to receive therapeutic support.
- While we have School Resource Officers (SROs) at our two high schools, I have continually requested the Dorchester County Council to place an SRO at each of our 13 buildings within DCPS. Sheriff Phillips (DCSD) and Chief Lewis (CPD) support this request. The Town of Hurlock is in this conversation as well, with their limited police staff, to aid Hurlock Elementary School. Sheriff Phillips successfully applied for a grant to fund present DCSD staff to assist two outlying schools in the county. Chief Lewis continues to send CPD units to our in-town schools for support when needed.

- With no increased SRO support and increased threats to schools and community of violence, the DCPS Board of Education has funded Student Support Monitors in our buildings.
- Access to buildings has been tightened. All doors to buildings are kept closed, locked, and access is only allowed with a programmable key card or traditional key for that building. Those without access must use our video calling system to gain entry when approved by main office review. Additionally, security cameras monitor entry points and other areas of the building and school campus and can be monitored remotely by the DCPS Central Office and local law enforcement agencies.
- I directed our Safety and Security Coordinator to research metal detectors and Weapons Detection Systems (WDS). The Motorola Weapons Detection System was identified as cutting-edge technology that would satisfy our security needs, and the Board of Education voted to allocate \$1.4 million to install the systems in our five secondary schools, with the cost of implementation including the funding needed to staff the WDS daily.
- While DCPS feels our secondary schools were the immediate need, we continue to stress the importance of the implementation of these systems in our remaining schools. I wrote multiple letters to the Dorchester County Council and Cambridge City Council asking for funding from their American Rescue Plan allocation. On Friday, June 3, I sent additional requests to both the City and County and to the town of Hurlock.

The DCPS Board of Education members and I feel enhanced safety precautions are a necessity for our schools. Do you feel the same way? I have heard our community speak about the tragedy in Texas, but there is very little conversation at our council meetings and community events on the topic of school safety for Dorchester County. I encourage you to ask our elected officials about their platform involving community and school safety. As we move toward the November elections, I encourage the Dorchester County community to ask candidates about their platforms toward safety as well as the DCPS annual budget.

Additionally, I implore the local County, City and Town leadership to move forward towards making decisions for the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable assets, our children. Please use part of your American Rescue Plan funding to provide further protections for our students and staff as doing so will not increase the tax burden on our community. American Rescue Plan funding is specifically allocated to counties for recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic and the increased violence in our communities during the pandemic certainly justifies this safety request by DCPS.

The safety and security of our students, staff, and buildings is our top priority and the partnerships we have with local law enforcement enhances physical safety for all. Without physical safety, we cannot support emotional safety, well-being, and ultimately, learning for your children. As a student, parent, staff member, or community partner, I am sure you will agree.

Sincerely,



W. David Bromwell  
Superintendent  
Dorchester County Public Schools