



RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEBORAH LOW, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
70 Prospect Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877

January 30, 2012

Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention & Children's Safety
Connecticut General Assembly
210 Capitol Ave
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Committee members,

The Newtown tragedy is unspeakable and my thoughts and prayers are with the students, staff, and families of the community. In the aftermath of the tragedy, all educators are focusing and redoubling their efforts to ensure that schools are as secure as possible. Thank you for convening these critical public hearings.

As Superintendent of the Ridgefield Public Schools, here are my summary comments regarding school security:

1. I support efforts in multiple areas to address security, including the physical plant; emergency communication infrastructure and devices; security staffing; staff training; mental health research and support services; interagency collaboration; and gun safety.
2. Physical plant – We must investigate and implement measures that improve visitor management; access control; appropriate design for building entrances, parking lots, and perimeters; security standards for windows, doors, and locks; camera surveillance, etc.
3. Emergency communication – We must ensure effective and reliable communication infrastructures with appropriate devices and protocols to support rapid emergency notification and first-responder coordination.
4. Security staffing – We must employ sufficient security staffing, such as unarmed security guards, to monitor visitor management, access control, and camera surveillance at each school. In addition, I recommend School Resource Officers be deployed to school districts at levels that provide adequate security support in the form of monitoring, presence, coordination, training, and communication for each school site.
5. Staff training – We need to review and revise staff training standards in the light of lessons-learned from the Newtown tragedy. For example, emergency drill protocols, frequency, and conditions need to be reviewed and revised. Training should be directed by the police department or other appropriate security professionals.
6. Mental health research and services – We need research, training, and resources to better understand, identify, intervene, and support students and families as early as possible who are at-risk and represent a greater likelihood of explosive, impulsive, and dangerous behavior.
7. Interagency collaboration – School districts need to be allowed to communicate and share information with police departments, Department of Children and Families Services, and/or other mental health and social services agencies regarding students and families who are at-risk and represent a greater likelihood for explosive or impulsive behavior that pose a potential risk to others. The agencies need to develop threat assessments including the degree of access to weapons.
8. Gun safety – From my point of view, there is no reason to own an assault weapon or high capacity magazines. Those devices are for military combat.
9. I urge an “all of the above” approach to security rather than labeling one area more or less important than another. I believe effective school security encompasses a wide range of strategies.

Again, thank you for convening these public hearings. I look forward to your final report.

Sincerely,

Deborah Low
Superintendent of Ridgefield Public Schools

Cc: Ridgefield First Selectman, Rudy Marconi; State Senator Toni Boucher, 26th Assembly District;
State Representative John Frey, House District 111; Ridgefield Board of Education; Ridgefield Public School Staff