



## **2025–2026 Strategic Safety and Security Assessment Executive Summary**

**Date:** May 11, 2026

**Prepared by:** Dr. Daniel Bittman, Superintendent

### **Overview and Foundations**

Edina Public Schools (EPS) is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where physical protection, emotional well-being, and community trust are prioritized. This Executive Summary is the culmination of a comprehensive, multi-phase assessment designed to evaluate existing systems and develop a multi-year roadmap for the future. While EPS has a long history of investing in safety, recent events have created a heightened sense of urgency within the community to further strengthen these layers.

The results of this comprehensive assessment confirm that Edina Public Schools continues to be a safe and secure environment for our students and staff, supported by a proven, multi-level "layered approach" to safety that integrates physical infrastructure, professional training, and proactive mental health wellness. Central to our success are the amazing and vital relationships we maintain with the Edina Police and Fire Departments, whose experts serve on our steering committee, are involved in our building safety audits, and partner with us on rigorous emergency drills to fundamentally strengthen and validate our security work. This collaborative foundation ensures that our protective measures are expert-informed and deeply integrated into the fabric of the Edina community.

The assessment is grounded in the "First Principles" methodology, which avoids simply copying neighboring districts and instead evaluates every tool and protocol against three criteria: all-hazards utility, human performance under stress, and root-cause disruption.

### **Strategic Alignment**

The recommendations within this report are intentionally aligned with the Edina Public Schools Strategic Plan 2020–2030:

- **Strategy A:** Ensures secure environments for academic excellence.
- **Strategy B:** Reviews safety data through an equity lens to provide inclusive protection.
- **Strategy C:** Fosters wellness and positive learning environments through prevention and mental health support.
- **Strategy E:** Strengthens community trust through transparent communication.

## A Community-Driven Process

This assessment was built on extensive stakeholder engagement, including:

- A 28-person Steering Committee featuring students, parents, staff, Edina Police and Fire, and safety experts.
- Nearly 600 survey responses from the community via ThoughtExchange.
- Direct site walkthroughs and audits of over 1.85 million square feet of district facilities.

## Key Stakeholder Themes:

- **People Over Hardware:** While technology is necessary, the community emphasized that training, mental health professionals, and relationships are the true backbone of safety.
- **Psychological Safety:** Stakeholders affirmed that emotional well-being and a sense of belonging are essential components of a safe school.
- **Communication Gaps:** Parents expressed a desire for more familiarity with safety protocols and faster communication during active incidents.

## Key Recommendations for Investment

The assessment identified that while EPS has many safety tools, they often operate in "silos" and rely on aging infrastructure. The following strategic investments are recommended:

1. **Modernizing Communication:**
  - Replacing 1960s-era analog PA systems with a **Unified IP-based digital system** featuring text displays and strobe lights for the hearing impaired.
  - Installing a **Distributed Antenna System (DAS)** at Edina High School to eliminate dangerous cellular "dead zones".
2. **Unifying Security Platforms:** Migrating CCTV and door access to a single, integrated platform to eliminate playback failures and false alarms.
3. **Hardening Classroom Protections:** Standardizing classroom locksets with thumb-turn mechanisms and "LOCKED/UNLOCKED" indicators so teachers do not have to step into hallways during a crisis.
4. **Professionalizing Staff Training:** Shifting from passive compliance to active proficiency through a "Safety Academy" digital library and paid, in-person orientation for new hires.
5. **Specialized Staffing:** Adding new positions, including a Cybersecurity Administrator, a Physical Security Operations Specialist, a Safety and Security Coordinator, Wellness Coordinators and Elementary Student Behavior Interventionists to manage complex systems.

## Strategic Exclusions

Following the "First Principles" audit, the district is not recommending AI weapons detection, wearable panic buttons, or metal detectors at this time. These technologies were found to have high false-positive rates, operational infeasibility, or a lack of reliability under stress.

## **Funding and Implementation**

To sustain these improvements, the district is proposing a 1.4% increase to the technology levy. This would cost the average Edina homeowner \$9.80 *per month* and generate approximately \$2.2 million annually to fund both infrastructure and the personnel required to maintain it.

### **Proposed Implementation Timeline:**

- **Immediate (0–1 Years):** PA system replacements, elementary anonymous reporting, and hiring identified personnel.
- **Short-Term (1–3 Years):** Unified Security Platform deployment and building-specific lock upgrades.
- **Mid-to-Long Term (4–10 Years):** Continued infrastructure cycles and technology refreshes.

### **Closing Statement**

Safety is not a project with a completion date; it is an ongoing commitment. By investing in both our physical systems and our people, Edina Public Schools ensures that our response to any future emergency will be swift, coordinated, and rooted in the principle that every life in our care is worth protecting.