

Thomas Jefferson Elementary School

Report Date 3/31/08

A Safety Audit Review of Thomas Jefferson Elementary School was conducted, 3/25/08 by a Beeville ISD, Safety Audit team. The school and the administration have a proactive approach to providing a safe learning environment.

An entrance conference was held with the school principal, Mrs. Sarah Jaure. The Safety Audit Team reviewed teacher climate surveys, inspected the facilities, and observed student and staff interaction while in transition through hallways and in the classroom environment.

Entrance Conference:

1. What is the most pressing safety need in your school?
Mrs. Jaure stated the fourth grade hallway openly faces Hayes Street which causes it to be open to the public which allows easy access for intruders. She also indicated that fencing is incomplete at the back parking lot.
2. What school safety activities does your school do best?
Mrs. Jaure feels her staff performs fire drills well and recognizes strangers in hallways.
3. What topics are most important for training and staff development?
Mrs. Jaure feels they have stressed CPR training for assistants, CPI training for staff, and food handlers' certificates have been obtained.
4. What are the biggest barriers to improve school safety measures?
Mrs. Jaure feels the lack of money is an issue as far as planning for safety needs.
5. What other factors not included in this survey do you believe affect school safety?
Mrs. Jaure feels at times students are dropped off too early in the morning by parents, leaving them unsupervised. Secondly, students have darted in front of traffic running to their cars at the end of the day. She plans to address this with staff in charge of supervision during student pick-up.

Assessment of Area/Neighborhood risk factors:

Type: Rural Community; middle to low-income class, 471 students, 86% low SES, 5% LEP, 11% Sp. Ed.

Grades served: 1 - 5

Streets: Surrounded by Hayes, Tyler, Jones, and Polk Streets

During the entrance conference Mrs. Jaure indicated that trespassing on school grounds after school hours, low tolerance of differences such as bullying, intimidation, harassment in school, and student truancy is extensively present on the campus. There appears to be a minimum amount of vandalism, graffiti, crime, gang activity in the neighborhood, there is some concern of student mobility and a lack of student support services readily available.

There were 48 staff climate surveys returned to the team. When answering questions such as feeling very safe at this school, school safety not being a big problem at the school, and worrying very little about the school's climate and safety, 29 responded strongly or mildly agree while 19 answered strongly or mildly disagree. However, a majority of respondents felt racial and ethnic heritage is respected, school rules and expectations are clear and well known, people care for each other at this school, and facilities are adequately cared for, clean, and conducive to learning. It should be noted that the majority of TJES staff members were re-located to their current building as they experienced the closing of the Madderra-Flournoy campus at the end of the 2006-07 school year. In addition, some staff members were transferred from their 2006-07 home campus to TJES. The Safety Audit Team feels that such a change could cause a disruption in the cohesive relationship that had been developed at staff members' previous locations and may be reflective of negative comments found in survey responses.

Student surveys indicated that the majority felt somewhat safe on the campus. However, the majority felt their teachers would protect them from harm. A number of surveys indicated a gun had been seen on the campus. As Mrs. Jaure clarified, it was noted that a BB gun was carried on the bus which looked very similar to a small handgun. At the unloading station, students informed their homeroom teacher who immediately informed the campus principal. The BB gun was confiscated and investigation indicated that the "insides" were removed and students were in no danger as the gun would not work. Discipline measures were enforced.

Documents:

The BISD Emergency Operation Plan was adopted by the local board of trustees on February 21, 2006. The EOP addresses mitigation/prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery and outlines measures taken at each phase. Each campus has an EOP annex which was developed by a district committee and should be tailored more to the individual campus. There has been district and campus wide training on each plan in order for school staff to be prepared during an emergency or catastrophic event. However, the Safety Audit Team feels each campus should have a more individual plan specific to the campus.

The floor plan that was made available to the team included doors and entryways showing direction of door swings. Interior hall doorways are shown. Locations of main shut-offs for natural gas and water lines are shown.

The fire evacuation maps were present in each room and provided to the team.

A faculty contact list (phone tree) serves as a means for emergency contact numbers (including home) in the event of an emergency.

Student handbooks are present and updated annually.

The counselor conducts age appropriate anti-bullying activities for all students and a character education program is evident.

The Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) was present and is updated annually.

Building Access:

- There is a single point of entry/exit to the main building and visitors are required to sign in at front office but the front office is located well into the main hallway which allows intruders to enter the building without being noticed. The fourth grade wing openly faces Hayes Street which makes classrooms easily accessible to intruders.
- There are appropriate signs present at all entrances.
- Visitors, when entering hallways or classrooms are required to wear dated visitor badges.
- Written permission is needed to remove students from school grounds and there is a sign-out procedure in place.
- There is a plan in place to monitor key distribution and duplications with an annual audit.
- Contractors and vendors are required to sign in, and they are required to wear visible identification.
- When making deliveries, drivers are not required to sign a delivery log therefore documentation is not maintained on what was actually delivered. However, all deliveries are accepted only at designated receiving areas and inspected prior to delivery to classrooms.
- Visitors are sometimes escorted within the school.
- Visitor badges were located out of reach of visitors.

Grounds and Building Exterior:

The school has a marquee clearly visible from the road indicating the school's name. Exterior of the building is free of graffiti. Most windows are functional, but an aging building may cause windows to be stuck, frozen window locks, or cracks. Exterior doors appear to be sturdy, have non-removable hinge pins, but have exterior hardware. Shrubs and foliage are trimmed to prevent people from hiding behind them and are trimmed to allow for good line of sight.

Areas of concern include:

- An area near bus parking allows access to the roof.
- There were noticeable items that could be used as projectile items that perhaps were carried by running water as there was a drainage ditch holding water and debris.
- There is a mechanical box at the front of the building that is painted shut, but needs to be locked.
- Deep recesses are present which could serve as a hiding place for intruders.
- Incomplete fencing.
- Swing section on playground needs additional filling to break falls.
- Discontinued furniture stored under a covered area between wings needs to be removed from school grounds.
- A bend in the drainage pipe by the ISS building has caused a hole by the bike rack.
- A volleyball pole base outside the counselor office needs removal.

Building Interior:

The Thomas Jefferson Elementary campus, last year, housed 5th and 6th graders but was transformed into an elementary campus over the summer of 2007. Staff worked diligently to support the transformation to make the campus welcoming to new students and their parents. Staff takes pride in their effort as hallways were painted, foliage is present, and student work is displayed. The campus appears well maintained and custodians take pride in the cleanliness of the building. Since the fourth grade wing is open and faces a busy street, staff becomes very familiar with parents of students in order to quickly recognize non-familiar individuals as they enter the campus.

Hallways are very clean and unobstructed in order to move freely throughout the building. Hallways and the stairwell are well lit and free from graffiti. Restrooms are well lit but appear outdated and could use renovation. Doors are free from locking from the inside and restrooms are monitored regularly by staff.

There is concern that the main entrance fails to be visible from the administrative office. Persons could easily enter the building and turn quickly down hallways. There is a camera installed to monitor the main entrance and hallways but as the camera sweeps hallways, the main entrance is no longer visible. Additionally, staff feels the fourth grade wing is too open facing Hayes Street, therefore, could easily be accessed by intruders.

There is evidence of the following:

- Clearly lit exit signs
- Locked mechanical/electrical rooms
- Emergency lighting
- CPR certified staff
- Valuable items such as computers, video cameras, etc. secured

- Monitored restrooms and hallways
- Appropriate handrails
- Properly installed flooring
- Adequate access to fire extinguishers

Cafeteria:

- The cafeteria is uniformly and adequately lit.
- Freezer door can be opened from the inside.
- Fire extinguisher is present in kitchen.
- Staff is not aware of the location of gas/water shutoffs but know location of electrical shutoff.

Gymnasium:

- The gym is located inside the main building and is spacious.
- Lighting fixtures lack protected covering.

Science lab:

The campus does not have a science lab but a classroom is used for scientific activities. The classroom contains manipulatives for student experimentation and enhancement for grade level Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

There was evidence of:

- A communication system
- Sinks but no eyewash station
- Safety goggles available for students
- First Aid kit
- Fire blanket
- Fire extinguisher
- Material Safety Data Sheet
- Emergency procedures
- Safety symbols posted

School Climate and Culture:

School climate and culture appeared to be positive and students were orderly. Hallways displayed student work. Staff was visible, helpful, and friendly. Students were neat in appearance and follow dress code policies.

There was evidence of the following:

- Annual update and review of the Student Code of Conduct
- Anti-bullying, anti-harassment, and anti-violence policies

- Dress code
- Behavioral expectations as outlined in the Code of Conduct
- Systematic process to collect and review discipline referral data
- School-wide respect for diversity
- Clean and unobstructed hallways
- Visibility of staff members
- Annual bully prevention training, conflict resolution training, and problem solving training
- Student training in positive social skills/bullying/gender respect
- Character Education program/activities
- A process to identify and serve the needs of students academically/behaviorally at risk

There is no anonymous hotline for students or staff to report incidents or suspicious activities (Crime Stoppers).

General Security:

After-school use of the building is encouraged. Many teachers work in the building after hours and activities take place during evening hours. There is a procedure developed and utilized by campus staff that security measures are in place after the evening event takes place. There is a central security alarm system that is monitored by the local police department but is not activated at night. However, at the end of each school day all classrooms, bathrooms, and exterior doors are locked. The bus loading and drop-off areas, parent pick-up and drop-off areas, and play areas are monitored by school staff.

The district staffs security at the high school and they can be summoned in an emergency situation on any campus.

Communication and Information:

The principal is the designated spokes person for the campus. In the event of an emergency, the media, parents, and staff will direct their questions to her. The principal is to follow protocol by contacting the superintendent before answering any questions from the media. Two-way communication is present between classrooms, the school nurse, local law enforcement, custodial staff, playground staff, and the main office. A method has been established to communicate security instructions to staff in a rapid and timely manner in case of an emergency.

Summary:

It is the opinion of the Safety Audit Team that Thomas Jefferson Elementary is a relatively safe and secure campus. The staff conducts themselves in a professional manner and creates a friendly and positive learning environment for their students. Students appeared to be orderly and very well mannered. It is this committee's opinion

that students' behavior is a reflection of high expectations and standards set by their teachers and administrators.

It is the team's opinion that the majority of students felt safe at TJES and felt their teachers would protect them. However, there appears to be some bullying issues as evident by survey responses stating students had been hit by rocks, threatened, and had some items stolen. Furthermore, it appears teachers feel fairly safe at the campus although there was concern regarding the lack of fencing. Preventative safety measures not currently in place that may reduce safety concerns would involve locking classroom doors during the school day and activating the security alarm system at the end of the school day.

Submitted by Beeville School Safety Audit Team members:

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