



MERIDIAN
SCHOOL DISTRICT #223

Meridian Community Unit School District 223

Phone: (815) 645-2230 • Fax: (815) 645-4325

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Risk Management Plan FY 26

INTRODUCTION

The Meridian School District is concerned for the safety of the students, teachers, parents, and all persons who use the public facilities operated by District 223. In the interest of better safety District 223 has the following Risk Management Plan. The Plan is devoted to several component parts but does not necessarily include all of the safety initiatives that District 223 staff provide in the interest of public safety.

It is of the utmost importance for the District: (1) to ensure that constitutional, statutory, regulatory and common law health, safety and civil rights protections are extended to all visitors, employees and students; (2) to make certain that the District's buildings and grounds are maintained in a safe condition; and (3) to provide careful supervision and protection of all the District's real and personal property, including vehicles.

Section 9-103 of the Local Government Employees Tort Immunity Act (745 ILCS 10/9-103 et seq. (the "Act") provides that a school district may protect itself against certain specified liabilities, by various means including "risk management directly attributable to loss prevention and loss reduction." Section 9-107 of the Act provides that a school district may annually levy a tax to:

(i) pay the cost of insurance, ...including all operating and administrative costs and expenses directly associated therewith, claims services and risk management directly attributable to loss prevention and loss reduction, legal services directly attributable to the insurance, self-insurance, or joint self-insurance program, and educational, inspectional, and supervisory services directly relating to loss prevention and loss reduction,..."

As further and independent authority, Section 17-2.5 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/17-2.5) provides that a school district may levy a tax which, when collected, may be used for the following purposes related to risk management:

to pay the cost of settlements or judgments under Section 9-102 of the Act, to pay the costs of protecting itself or its employees against liability, property damage or loss, including all costs and reserves of being a member of an insurance pool, under Section 9-103 of that Act, to pay the costs of and principal and interest on bonds issued under Section 9-105 of that Act, to pay tort judgments or settlements under Section 9-104 of that Act, to the extent necessary to discharge such obligations, and to pay the cost of risk care management programs in accordance with Section 9-107 of that Act.

Meridian School District has engaged in a formal process designed to identify, specially address, and then reduce or eliminate exposures under the Act. The process engaged in by the School District has the following characteristics:

1. Identification and analysis of exposures;
2. Selection of techniques to handle each exposure;
3. Implementation of the chosen techniques;
4. Periodic monitoring of the implementation of the techniques, including the making of adjustments as appropriate.



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This Plan is the result of a formal process engaged in by the School District to identify and attempt to reduce or eliminate exposures under the Act. It identifies the exposure, assigns personnel and develops actions to help eliminate or handle the exposure, and then implements a process to reduce or eliminate the exposure and to monitor the District's progress.

DEFINITIONS

Liability. Legal responsibility for claims for injury to persons, property, reputation, character, estate or privilege to the fullest extent comprehended by the Act. This excludes liability based exclusively on contract or criminal penalties, but includes liability based, actually or potentially, in whole or in part, on common law tort, statute, constitution, or regulation of the United States or the State of Illinois or any other state, or any of their subdivisions.

Risk Management. The intentional effort to avoid the incursion of liability or property damage by the School District, its Board of Education, and its agents to the fullest extent comprehended by the Act. Risk Management includes, but is not limited to, the following School District functions:

- avoidance of injury on District premises, at District-sponsored activities, or resulting from the condition of District real or personal property or the actions or omissions of District agents
- liability insurance, including commercial insurance, self-insurance and insurance through cooperative means
- workers compensation and unemployment insurance
- sexual misconduct
- cyber liability
- pollution liability
- property damage insurance
- tort judgments and settlements
- tort bond costs
- legal fees and costs related to civil rights and tort actions
- security measures for students, staff and property
- inspection and repair costs to maintain school facilities in, or return school facilities to, a safe and usable condition
- asbestos abatement
- blood-borne pathogen controls
- school safety and crisis management plans
- compliance with safety and health regulations, including but not limited to those relating to student health and safety, hazardous materials, radon, lead, occupational safety and health, science and industrial/vocational educational safety, underground storage tanks, and vehicles



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- reactions or responses to accidents or threatened injuries to the extent such reactions or responses are designed to avoid aggravating the extent of injuries
- harassment and discrimination response policies and procedures

The primary parts of the plan are devoted to the following safety concerns. The Risk Management Plan will include sections on insurance, as well as assigned safety responsibilities for building principals, head custodians, the Athletic Director, and the Transportation Director.

INSURANCE

District 223 will provide a quality insurance program to support and promote safety in the work place, on the grounds, and in the buildings operated by the District. The insurance program will include workers' compensation insurance, unemployment compensation insurance, school board legal liability insurance, the treasurer's bond coverage and appropriate general liability insurance coverage for the buildings, grounds and property.

Workers Compensation:

The intent of the workers' compensation insurance coverage is to provide a safety net that will pay for expenses related to accidents that may occur involving District 223 employees while they are working for the school district. It is also provided to take advantage of the accident prevention publications, workshops, and recommendations from the insurance carrier and their professional safety representatives. The first focus is to prevent accidents from happening. The second is to provide financial resources to cover the expenses of accidents that may happen.

Workers compensation coverage will provide insurance that meets the legal requirements of the State of Illinois and maintains at least \$2,000,000 of bodily injury coverage from accidents for each accident and \$2,000,000 of coverage for bodily injury by disease for each employee. The insurance coverage will consider the various services provided by District 223 employees including driving vehicles and providing professional, clerical and cafeteria services. The insurance will be based on an annual assessment of the payroll and other factors, such as District 223's safety record and claims experiences. The District also incurs administrative costs to properly supervise and administer the claims monitoring and reporting programs.

Unemployment Compensation:

District 223 provides unemployment compensation in cooperation with the State of Illinois. Illinois bills District 223 on a regular basis for actual claims submitted against District 223. District 223 in turn pays those claims after review. It provides for appropriate unemployment compensation for District 223 employees.



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Liability Insurance:

District 223 carries several kinds of liability insurance to provide for the safety and protection of District 223 and the people who use the public schools and grounds. The primary focus is on safety and prevention of accidents. To that end, District 223 accesses the workshops, on-site safety assessment services, and safety publications provided by the insurance carrier and their professional risk management staff. District 223 has specified specific safety features on playground equipment and has its playgrounds inspected on a regular basis. District 223 has a record of putting safety first to prevent as many accidents as possible.

However, having adequate levels of insurance coverage is a fundamental part of the Risk Management Plan. Accordingly, District 223 carries the following general liability insurance coverage; flood, crime, earthquake, general property, mobile equipment, inland marine, auto, blanket liability, and excess liability coverage. These coverages range from \$100,000 for employee dishonesty to \$20,000,000 per occurrence in blanket liability coverage. For specific details please refer to District 223's actual insurance policies. The policies are maintained and updated on an annual basis as needed based on changes in buildings, grounds, and the contents of property owned by District 223.

School Board Legal Liability:

District 223 carries a Public School Board Legal Liability Program. That insurance policy provides a minimum of \$20,000,000 aggregate coverage for the School Board. In addition, it provides \$10,000 in non-monetary claims and attorney fees, \$250,000 in non-monetary claims and attorney fees in the area of special education, and \$100,000 in breach of contract claims related to contracts with independent contractors.

Treasurer's Bond:

District 223 provides for up-to a \$7,000,000 Treasurer's Bond in accordance with the laws of Illinois for School District Treasurers. The bond satisfies the requirements for legal limitations of bonding in relation to the amount of the budget and investments handled on an annual basis by the District. The Workers Compensation Self-Insurance Trust (WCSIT), at no charge, provides the Treasurer's Bond.

Student Accident Insurance:

The first line of defense against student accidents is to provide a safe environment for students to attend classes and participate in extra-curricular activities. To that end, faculty and staff of District 223 work hard to prevent accidents and to set up a safe place for students to participate in school activities.

For the above reasons, the district carries student accident insurance for all district-enrolled students, which addresses accidental injuries they may incur during the school day, or a school-sponsored sport or activity. If District 223 did not require student accident insurance, District 223's general liability plan would be in a



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position of defending a series of claims that are most appropriately dealt with in the accident and health insurance field. It would be inappropriate to allow this gap to exist. It would also create an unnecessary increase in premiums for the liability coverage caused by the cost of dealing with inappropriate health related and accident claims.

The general overall responsibility for the development and maintenance of the District's Risk Management Program rests with the Superintendent of the School District. The Superintendent shall be responsible for developing the Plan, identifying the various components of the Plan, and delegating responsibilities for these components to the appropriate personnel. The Superintendent will continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the Plan and be apprised of needed revisions, additions, or deletions to the components and assigned responsibilities. The Superintendent, or his/her designee, shall monitor staff to ensure that risk management responsibilities are evaluated and reported. He/she shall serve as the School District's liaison to various consulting services, claim and adjustment services and insurance companies.

The School District has identified the following areas of possible exposure to the School District:

1. Conditions of Buildings, Grounds, Equipment and Property;
2. Transportation of Students;
3. Health and Safety of Students, Personnel and Visitors.

CONDITION OF BUILDINGS, GROUNDS, EQUIPMENT AND PROPERTY

The School District's Risk Management Plan in relation to the safe conditions of buildings and grounds and protection of the District's real and personal property shall primarily be a responsibility of various members of the District Administrative team (Superintendent, Principals, Buildings and Grounds Supervisor and Director of Facilities), thus a portion of their time will be directly related to the District's risk management/tort avoidance program. Their responsibilities and duties shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Development and identification of the various components of responsibilities concerning inspection of buildings, grounds and equipment to provide protection to the District, its employees, and the public. Within this parameter, they shall be responsible for the supervision of the building custodians, daily inspection of building and grounds, the development and operation of the District's building security program, including the acquisition and supervision of necessary security personnel and purchasing of security devices;
2. The maintenance of the legal and safe conditions of building and grounds. They are responsible for the District's compliance with State and Federal laws regarding employee and student health and safety; i.e., asbestos, radon, lead, etc. The Superintendent shall be the District's official Designated Person for Asbestos Management, and he/she shall be responsible for the training of the District maintenance and custodial personnel to handle such materials.



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3. The coordination of all personnel performing maintenance duties within the Risk Management Plan – the District and contractual personnel, etc. It is expected that the Buildings and Grounds Supervisor, Director of Facilities and designated custodians devote a portion of their time in daily inspections of their respective building and grounds to provide for a risk-free environment.
4. The development and identification of the various components and responsibilities concerning inspection of building grounds, and equipment to provide protection to the District, its employees, students, and the public, including the supervision of custodians, maintenance workers, and building engineers.

The Head Custodian in each building shall also have risk management responsibilities. He/she shall be responsible for the daily inspection of buildings and grounds including:

- a) Mold inspections;
- b) Water system inspections;
- c) ADA compliance inspections; and
- d) Building security devices to reduce unauthorized access.

In order to ensure that all students, personnel, and visitors are protected from undue exposure to risk situations while in the buildings or on the grounds of the District, the Head Custodian's responsibilities shall also include:

- a) Identify wet areas in the building which create a danger of slipping or falling until the area is dry.
- b) Identify any situations of danger or potential liability as it is observed inside or outside the building.
- c) Be consistently alert to potentially harmful situations or conditions inside or outside the building.
- d) Be responsible for the daily inspection of buildings, grounds, vehicles, and equipment to provide a risk-free environment.

The Buildings and Grounds Supervisor coordinates and establishes the training for District 223 custodial and maintenance employees relative to the legal requirements for training concerning the proper handling of asbestos and MSDS information. Generally, the training takes the shape of a half-day seminar conducted by the insurance company. If necessary, outside professional resources are also utilized.

The Building and Ground Supervisor coordinates and establishes an annual inspection of all fire safety related equipment by a qualified specialist recognized by the State of Illinois to certify such inspections. In addition, fire safety equipment is monitored on a monthly basis by the custodial staff. Any fire alarms or smoke detectors in need of repair or replacement are addressed. Any fire or smoke detectors in need of a charge are recharged or replaced. Any new detector areas or any new extinguisher areas are identified, obtained, and installed.

The Building and Grounds Supervisor coordinates and establishes an annual inspection of all boilers and related equipment by a qualified specialist recognized by the State of Illinois to certify such inspections. Any needed repairs are promptly ordered and completed. This is done on an annual basis.



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The Director of Facilities coordinates and establishes the annual inspections for District 223's gyms, bleachers and the related structural supports. A professional, licensed architect or engineer registered with the State of Illinois and professionally competent to make such inspections does the inspection.

TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS

The School District's Risk Management Plan in relation to the safe conditions for its transportation program shall be the primary responsibility of the School District's Transportation Director. His/her duties shall include, but not be limited to:

1. All aspects of the School District's transportation program including the supervision of transportation personnel in their risk management responsibilities;
2. Daily inspection of buses for safety problems and resultant efforts to correct any possible tort producing deficiencies;
3. Review hazardous road conditions relevant to the safe transportation of students;
4. Incidents occurring in connection with the transportation of students before, during and after leaving the school bus.
5. Inspect buses for legally required State inspections and for maintaining risk-free student and employee operating conditions.

The Transportation Director and the Buildings and Grounds Supervisor work collaboratively to coordinate and establish a regular maintenance program for all District 223 trucks, vehicles, and busses including the general safety inspection and replacement of worn parts

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF STUDENTS, PERSONNEL AND VISITORS

Principals are assigned the responsibility to provide for the safety of the students and faculty under their supervision in the buildings to which they are assigned. Their job descriptions make reference to this responsibility in the same general terms that other duties and responsibilities are described. Evidence of this responsibility is further documented in the books developed by the administrators of each building detailing their emergency plans for the safety and well-being of the students and faculty under their administration. The emergency plans deal with a variety of threats to the safety and well-being of people, for example tornado and weather emergencies as well as unauthorized use of weapons.

In addition to the emergency safety plans, building principals are specifically responsible for the safety of students and staff in the day-to-day operations of their buildings. It is their responsibility to put into place such building procedures as necessary to ensure the safe and orderly movement of people from place to place, up and down stairs, and through hallways and corridors from class to class or to lunch, assemblies, bus lines and other areas as needed. It is also their responsibility to ensure that classrooms, labs, athletic areas, cafeterias, and auditoriums are safe for the use of students and staff in the pursuit of their day-to-day instructional activities.



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For example, Principals must provide for adequate supervision to ensure that they can prevent, where possible, any fights and to be available to stop in a reasonable time any fights that start in order to prevent serious injury, if possible. They must also ensure that students are never left unsupervised to allow any illegal or dangerous activities to develop without detection whenever reasonably possible so that fire hazards and other dangerous activities are guarded against. Other safety precautions as dictated by the prudent and reasonable supervision of the building are part of the management responsibility of the building Principals.

Building Principals shall provide for the protection of students and personnel and freedom from tort producing situations that arise from, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Incidents in the lunchroom;
2. Incidents on the playgrounds;
3. Incidents occurring during school athletics and other school sponsored events;
4. Incidents occurring during physical education classes;
5. Incidents occurring during manual or vocational training;
6. Incidents in connection with the transportation of students, before, during and after leaving the bus;
7. Incidents in connection with safety of students from traffic hazards;
8. Incidents due to acts of fellow students committed in the classroom, outside the classroom, or after leaving school;
9. Incidents due to lack or insufficiency of supervisors before, during or after school;
10. Incidents in school grounds including parking lots and playground areas.

Some of the primary responsibilities of the building principals are to supervise the provision of special education services to special needs students in the School District, to ensure that all rules, regulations, and legal requirements are met, and to reduce the risk of injury to special needs students, staff and other School District students. These responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Reviewing and implementing procedures to ensure that legal and safety rights are extended to special needs students, staff and others in contact with special needs students;
2. Reviewing and implementing procedures to ensure that staff have proper training and equipment to meet the physical needs of special needs students;
3. Supervising due process hearings to ensure School District compliance with laws;
4. Planning and supervising staff development on risk management for special education personnel;
5. Supervising and training to ensure that individual education programs are followed.
6. Training staff in CPI, CPR, AED and first aid.

Athletic Director:



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The Athletic Director shall develop a program for review of equipment and facilities. On a regular basis the Athletic Director shall inspect certain athletic equipment such as wrestling mats, track equipment, and other equipment to ensure that the equipment is in proper condition sufficient to reduce the possibility of injury to the student athlete.

Supporting Documentation:

Throughout this plan there are several references to documentation. Where appropriate, copies of basic documents are added to the plan for easy reference. But in many cases the documents referred to consist of multi-volume sets of manuals or books. All of the materials are readily available for inspection by appropriate authorities. Putting all of the materials in one place would be an inappropriate and inefficient exercise. For example, Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), are school specific books that contain copies of all the MSDS sheets specific to that particular school or location and are useful only in relation to events that happen at that location. A compiled list of MSDS materials is provided to the fire department in a format specific to the needs of the Area Fire Departments. Thus, each specific need is taken care of in a different format. A building principal will need access to his or her specific building emergency plan. But the building principal may not want to file copies of the liability insurance policies, or the list of maintenance assignments. However, a person interested in reviewing District 223's Risk Management Plan and preparedness to handle safety issues would want to know where various documents are maintained. The following list will help in that respect.

- All Reports and Amendments with supporting documentation concerning Life Safety are maintained in the District Administrative Office.
- All MSDS information is maintained in the building where the products are actually used and available to the employees who use those products.
- All Asbestos Plans are filed and maintained according to the legal requirements.
- The Board of Education Policy Manual is maintained in the District Administration Office. In addition, each building principal and board member maintains a copy of the policy manual.
- Emergency plans are located at each specific building with the building administrator.

These plans detail the procedures in each building that would be:

- Used for a variety of problems that may arise. They are shared with faculty and used and managed by the building administrator.
- Facilities Disaster Plans are located with the Superintendent. These plans detail how the custodial and maintenance crews will operate in support of the building Emergency Plans.
- Liability Insurance Policies are maintained in the District Administrative Offices.
- Job Descriptions are maintained in the District Administrative Offices.
- Tort Levy information is maintained in the District Administrative Offices.



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JOB DESCRIPTIONS RELATED TO RISK CARE MANAGEMENT

(Tort Immunity Tax Funds)

Superintendent – (33%)

- Oversee and review risk management program
- Oversee and direct personnel assignments related to risk management program
- Administer and evaluate insurance
- Administer and evaluate building and grounds safety procedures
- Coordinate and evaluate all types of security programs and procedures
- Manage and oversee payments and services related to tort immunity managed by the Ogle County Educational Co-op (percentage to be determined by their risk management audit annually)
- Supervises building maintenance personnel in the inspection and corrective action of situations of tort potential, Supervises Transportation Director in risk management for all student transportation services and staff discipline concerning transportation

Director of Safety and Operations – (50%)

- Supervise and review district safety operations
- Oversee all departments to ensure collaboration and efficient systems and processes in order to provide consistent safe environments
- Administer risk management program
- Administer and manage personnel assignments related to risk management program
- Research, advocate for, and assign professional development as related to areas related to continued improvement of school safety, including but not limited to conferences, in-house PD, and other asynchronous programs, not to exceed \$15,000
- Research and implementation of additional safety related products, technology, and services, as approved by the Board of Education, Superintendent, or designee, not to exceed \$200,000

Principals – (12%); Assistant Principal – (15%)

- Responsible for implementing and supervising policies and procedures for the protection of students' constitutional and statutory rights
- Responsible for implementing and supervising policies and procedures for legal and proper student testing, special education administrative costs, and evaluation, identification, and placement of special education students
- Responsible for implementing and supervising policies and procedures providing confidentiality of student psychological profiles and other student records including but not limited to discipline records of students



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- Responsible for implementing policies and procedures for the safe supervision of students during the school day and at extra-curricular activities
- Evaluation and administration of building safety and emergency drills
- Responsible for implementing and supervising policies and procedures for the safety of students

Director of Buildings and Grounds – (25%)

- Evaluate building safety practices and procedures
- Responsible for supervising building and grounds maintenance practices and procedures to prevent safety hazards
- Responsible for inspection of buildings and grounds to provide for a risk-free environment, control of hazardous materials, participation in safety training
- Responsible for supervision of custodians in regard to safe practices
- Responsible for inspection of bleachers
 - Result of Tort Time study indicated in week sampled that Director of Buildings and Grounds spent 46% of their time on risk-management activities

Head Custodians – (25%)

- Responsible for daily inspection of building and grounds to provide for a risk-free environment
- Responsible for building sanitation inspections and security devices and equipment
 - Result of Tort Time study indicated in week sampled that Lead Custodians spent over 75% of their time on risk-management activities

Transportation Director – (10%); Bus Mechanic – (18%)

- Responsible for supervising practices and procedures for required legal inspections of district vehicles and to ensure safety for all students and District employees who are transported in District vehicles
- Responsible for developing and maintaining policies and procedures for keeping all transportation vehicles in a safe condition
- Responsible for developing and maintaining policies and procedures for risk management/tort avoidance for all student transportation services
- Responsible for developing and maintaining policies and procedures for staff discipline concerning bus transportation

Athletic Director – (40%)

- Evaluate and inspect equipment working condition
- Administer athletic program safety



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- Inspect athletic fields and identify any unsafe conditions
- Train coaches on potential hazards and liabilities with coaching assignments
- Develop and monitor transportation procedures for safe travel to and from athletic events

Buildings and Grounds Employee – (15%)

- Coordinate and supervise asbestos management
- Responsible for fire safety equipment
- Responsible for inspection of boilers, and HVAC systems

Nursing – (33%)

- Implementing or supervising policies and procedures to protect students
- Supervises or participates in direct interactions with students in order to prevent transfer or spread of germs, disease, and illness
- Ensuring confidentiality of students is being maintained

Counselors – (12%)

- Implementing appropriate procedures for safe supervision of students during the school
- Implementing or supervising policies and procedures to protect students
 - Result of Tort Time study indicated in week sampled that Counselors spent over 30% of their time on risk-management activities

Human Resources Manager – (45%)

- Administer risk management program
- Administer personnel assignments related to risk management program
- Administer and evaluate insurance

School Resource Officer – (100%)

- A School Resource Officer (SRO) plays a crucial role in maintaining a safe and secure learning environment within educational institutions. Their risk management responsibilities include:
 - **Security and Threat Assessment:** SROs are responsible for assessing potential threats to the school community. This involves identifying security vulnerabilities, analyzing potential risks, and implementing measures to prevent or mitigate them. They work closely with school administrators and law enforcement agencies to develop emergency response plans and conduct drills to ensure preparedness.
 - **Crisis Intervention:** SROs are trained to respond to various crises, including incidents involving violence, bullying, substance abuse, or mental health issues. They collaborate with school staff, students, and parents to address these concerns promptly, ensuring that appropriate interventions are in place to reduce the potential for escalation.



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- o **Prevention Programs:** SROs are actively involved in implementing prevention programs aimed at reducing risks within the school community. These programs may focus on topics such as drug and alcohol education, anti-bullying campaigns, internet safety, and conflict resolution. By educating students and staff, SROs contribute to the prevention of various risks.
- o **Community Engagement:** Building positive relationships with students, staff, parents, and the broader community is a vital aspect of an SRO's role. By fostering open communication and trust, SROs can better identify potential risks and concerns. They may also collaborate with community organizations and agencies to provide resources and support that address the underlying causes of certain risks.
- o **Training and Education:** SROs often provide training sessions for school staff and students on topics related to safety, security, and risk management. These training sessions could cover areas such as active shooter drills, evacuation procedures, recognizing signs of potential threats, and reporting suspicious activities. By empowering the school community with knowledge and skills, SROs contribute to a safer environment.

