

School Safety

www.fultonschools.org/safety questions@fultonschools.org

Fulton County Board of Education

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Fulton County Schools is committed to providing safe and secure learning environments. Our Board of Education makes annual, ongoing investments that provide safety and security to our physical buildings and also has programs in place that focus on the social and emotional well-being of our students and staff. These investments have increased in recent years, broadening the support provided to all.

Safety Support Systems Provided to Schools

School Police Officers and Safety Personnel

Fulton County Schools has one of the largest school police forces in Georgia. As one of only three school police departments certified by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (GACP), our 62 sworn officers are ready to respond to any situation. In 2014, the police department was reorganized by learning community to provide better service, leadership support of schools, more nimble response, and better command and control. Finally, 12 officers are SWAT certified. On February 27, 2018, the School Board increased its support of safety by creating six additional school resource officer positions.

In addition to our police force, our School Board and local school leaders invest in an additional 34 non-sworn personnel called campus security associates (CSAs). These personnel assist in securing schools and buildings throughout the district. CSAs receive annual training from our Safety and Security Team and support our local school leaders to further meet the safety needs of our communities. The School Safety Officer Course is a three-day/24-hour training course for non-sworn safety and security officers working in schools with a School Resource Officer (SRO) or alone.

Safety Training

School safety coordinators and school leaders receive annual safety training, which includes reviewing active shooter protocols. Recently, all school leaders were retrained on our protocols, and these have been redelivered to all school-based staff. Student Health Services staff provide ongoing AED, CPR, and first aid training, and all clinic staff receive annual training regarding response protocols.



Quick Tip Feature on FCS App

Fulton County Schools has a “Quick Tip” function on our FCS app (available for iOS and Android phones) to report concerns anonymously. The tool provides an easy way to “see something, say something.” Reports of a threat also may be emailed to safety@fultonschools.org or reported through <https://asp.schoolmessenger.com/fultonschools/quicktip>.

Safety Plans/Reporting/Drills

Each school has a safety plan that is reviewed annually by school leadership and district safety staff and also is reported to the State of Georgia/Georgia Emergency Management Agency. School Board policy requires all schools to complete evacuation, shelter, soft lockdown, and hard lockdown drills. Evacuation drills are required monthly and other drills are required at the start of the school year as well as at the beginning of second semester.

Mass Communication/Notification Systems

The school system uses SchoolMessenger as its district-wide emergency communications tool. The tool can be used to notify all students and/or staff in a school, a learning community, or district-wide via phone call or email. In addition, Transportation team members use a tool called “Bus Bulletin” to notify bus riders’ parents regarding emergencies/incidents by assigned bus.

Safety Investments Through eSPLOST

Our taxpayers have funded additional improvements in facilities, technology, and equipment to support safety through the one-penny sales tax for education called eSPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax).

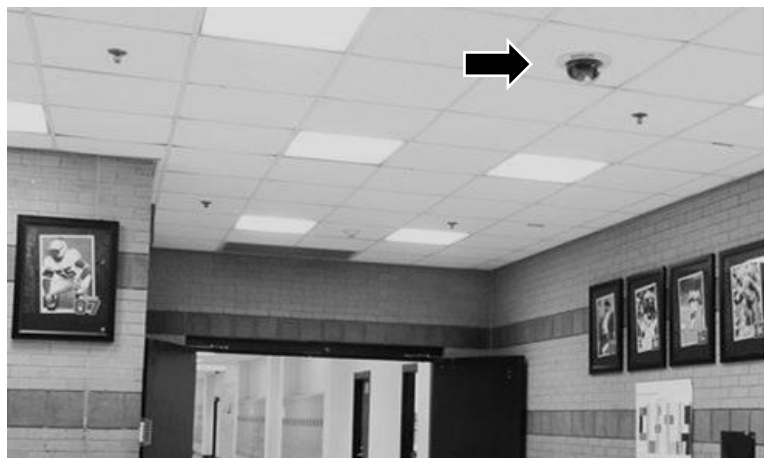
Front Entry Controls/Visitor Identification Systems

All Fulton County Schools are equipped with front door entry controls. After student arrival all exterior doors are locked, and visitors and students must be granted access by personnel in the front office. These devices are located at the entrance of every school and are equipped with cameras, intercoms to the front office, and a notification button. Visitors are required to push the button to ring the front office staff, who can view and question visitors via a video phone system, and then determine whether to unlock the front door for entry.



Front Entry Additions/Reconfigurations

Several of our older high schools recently received front entry additions that enhance safety, creating clear entry points for our community. The new atriums increase visibility and access control at the entrance of the school.



Avigilon Video Surveillance Systems

Using SPLOST funds, the district is upgrading camera systems in every school to Avigilon, one of the nation’s leading video surveillance systems. These systems allow our safety and security teams to monitor activities in and around facilities with laser sharp accuracy via desktop computers, non-portable monitoring stations or mobile devices.

In addition, district office personnel, local school leaders and/or building managers can search for reported activities that have occurred for investigative purposes or monitor activities for mitigation purposes. High tech lenses allow the users to pan the cameras throughout a pre-determined range, zoom in for a closer view, or change the angles of the view – all in high definition quality. The artificial intelligence (AI) component of this technology allows for users to find targets within the facility based upon a tagged “appearance search.” This type of technology is currently used at our nation’s major airports as well as other highly secured environments.



Also, Fulton County Schools has partnered with Sandy Springs Police and CHATCOM 911 so that in emergencies they have direct access to view the Avigilon cameras in Sandy Springs schools. Discussions are under way to add this capability to the Alpharetta Police Department and Johns Creek Police Department.

Visitor Management System

All schools are equipped with a visitor management system called “Raptor.” Visitors register in the building at the time of arrival, and their information is checked against state/national sex offender databases as well as local school police databases.

Bus Surveillance Systems

In the past five years, all school buses in the Fulton County School System fleet have received video surveillance system upgrades. Each bus is equipped with four video cameras, which provide surveillance of activities within the buses and can assist our team in investigating behaviors that affect student safety.



Equipping Officers/School Police Fleet Expansion

The FCS School Police fleet includes 42 vehicles, which not only provides greater visibility of our school police, but also increases mobility of our officers, the ability to patrol all schools, and the capability for emergency response. We will continue to ensure our law enforcement and safety teams are equipped to respond quickly to all situations. Investments include body armor and a school report management system which will permit easier access to criminal records among metro police departments.

Law Enforcement Communications

FCS School Police will begin participating in the nationwide FirstNet public safety broadband and cellular network. AT&T, in a public-private partnership with FirstNet, will operate and maintain a highly secure wireless broadband communications network for Georgia’s public safety. With the power of priority and pre-emption, first responders will no longer have to compete with non-emergency users for a connection and can reliably connect to the network for information needed instantly.

Electronic Emergency Response Protocols/Internal Communications

The School Board approved a new tool called CrisisGo, which quickly distributes emergency operations plans to staff, via mobile devices, during emergency situations. Over a three-year cycle, this technology will replace the traditional paper emergency plans. It will be rolled out in phases starting in March 2018, with full implementation anticipated by Spring 2019.



Social-Emotional Learning Support Systems

Social-Emotional Learning Programs are in many schools to support students’ development as well as personal safety and good decision-making.

Text A Tip Pilot

“Text A Tip” is a pilot program in five high schools – Cambridge, Milton, Roswell, Westlake and Langston Hughes – that began in January 2018 through a partnership with the Fulton County Board of Commissioners. Those who use the app can be connected anonymously to a licensed mental health professional for immediate mental health resources and referrals, 24 hours a day/7 days a week. The goal is to expand the program to additional schools in the near future.

Mental Health Agencies and Partners in Fulton County Schools

Fulton County Schools developed a protocol in 2013 to allow mental health partners to provide services in schools. Students may access mental health providers on campus should they need that level of support and should their parents desire that option for them.



Student Crisis Response Protocol

The student crisis response protocol is used by all FCS counselors, school social workers and school psychologists when a student is suspected to be at risk for harm to self or others. Immediate mental health resources are provided to families. Re-entry meetings are held once a student returns to school to ensure that effective transitioning takes place and to document a plan for addressing the needs and safety of the student and others.

CARE Team

CARE (Care Response and Recovery) team members are deployed whenever schools experience the death of a student or staff member. The focus is on recovery and grief support to maintain order in the school and to allow for ventilation and validation of emotions. FCS counselors, social workers, and psychologists are trained annually on these procedures.

Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

Mental health first aid training has been provided to 600+ FCS staff and community members. The training provides education and awareness of mental health for those who work with children and youth.

APEX Grant Funding for Mental Health Providers

The APEX grant supports the provision of mental health services for students in several of our schools. This option allows for equity-based services for families experiencing financial need.

PEAK Academies

Pursuing Excellence And Knowledge (PEAK) Academies provide academic, social, behavioral and emotional supports for students who are suspended (short-term or long-term) for serious code of conduct offenses, many of which exhibit mental health challenges. There are three PEAK Academies in our school system – North Fulton, South Fulton and Southeast Fulton.

School Counselors, School Social Workers and School Psychologists

All FCS student support personnel are trained to identify and refer students who may be experiencing mental health, social or behavioral issues.

Behavioral Specialists

FCS currently has nine behavioral specialists who work with schools to identify students with behavioral needs and then assisting them by training and supporting on the implementation of behavioral intervention.

Think First, Stay Safe (K-5)

This program contains instruction on personal safety, online safety, and school climate which supports the K-5 health curriculum. Students learn important information to help keep them protected from unsafe behaviors and situations.

Online Resources

Fulton County Schools has a special Safety and Security webpage (www.fultonschools.org/safety) where resources can be accessed, including this tipsheet from the National Association of School Psychologists on how to talk to children about violence. To view this PDF, visit www.tinyurl.com/NASPsafety or download it from www.fultonschools.org/safety.



Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers

High profile acts of violence, particularly in schools, can confuse and frighten children who may feel in danger or worry that their friends or loved-ones are at risk. They will look to adults for information and guidance on how to react. Parents and school personnel can help children feel safe by establishing a sense of normalcy and security and talking with them about their fears.

1. **Reassure children that they are safe.** Emphasize that schools are very safe. Validate their feelings. Explain that all feelings are okay when a tragedy occurs. Let children talk about their feelings, help put them into perspective, and assist them in expressing these feelings appropriately.
2. **Make time to talk.** Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their feelings readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or yard work. Some children prefer writing, playing music, or doing an art project as an outlet. Young children may need concrete activities (such as drawing, looking at picture books, or imaginative play) to help them identify and express their feelings.
3. **Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate.**
 - **Early elementary school** children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them. Give simple examples of school safety like reminding children about exterior doors being locked, child monitoring efforts on the playground, and emergency drills practiced during the school day.
 - **Upper elementary and early middle school** children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to provide safe schools.
 - **Upper middle school and high school** students will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence in schools and society. They will share concrete suggestions about how to make school safer and how to prevent tragedies in society. Emphasize the role that students have in maintaining safe schools by following school safety guidelines (e.g. not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats to the school safety made by students or community members, etc.), communicating any personal safety concerns to school administrators, and accessing support for emotional needs.
4. **Review safety procedures.** This should include procedures and safeguards at school and at home. Help children identify at least one adult at school and in the community to whom they go if they feel threatened or at risk.
5. **Observe children's emotional state.** Some children may not express their concerns verbally. Changes in behavior, appetite, and sleep patterns can also indicate a child's level of anxiety or discomfort. In most children, these symptoms will ease with reassurance and

time. However, some children may be at risk for more intense reactions. Children who have had a past traumatic experience or personal loss, suffer from depression or other mental illness, or with special needs may be at greater risk for severe reactions than others. Seek the help of mental health professional if you are at all concerned.

6. **Limit television viewing of these events.** Limit television viewing and be aware if the television is on in common areas. Developmentally inappropriate information can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children. Adults also need to be mindful of the content of conversations that they have with each other in front of children, even teenagers, and limit their exposure to vengeful, hateful, and angry comments that might be misunderstood.
7. **Maintain a normal routine.** Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring and promote physical health. Ensure that children get plenty of sleep, regular meals, and exercise. Encourage them to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities but don't push them if they seem overwhelmed.

Suggested Points to Emphasize When Talking to Children

- Schools are safe places. School staff works with parents and public safety providers (local police and fire departments, emergency responders, hospitals, etc.) to keep you safe.
- The school building is safe because ... (cite specific school procedures).
- We all play a role in the school safety. Be observant and let an adult know if you see or hear something that makes you feel uncomfortable, nervous or frightened.
- There is a difference between reporting, tattling or gossiping. You can provide important information that may prevent harm either directly or anonymously by telling a trusted adult what you know or hear.
- Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen, it is important to understand the difference between the **possibility** of something happening and **probability** that it will affect you (our school community).
- Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand. Doing things that you enjoy, sticking to your normal routine, and being with friends and family help make us feel better and keep us from worrying about the event.
- Sometimes people do bad things that hurt others. They may be unable to handle their anger, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or suffering from mental illness. Adults (parents, teachers, police officers, doctors, faith leaders) work very hard to get those people help and keep them from hurting others. It is important for all of us to know how to get help if we feel really upset or angry and to stay away from drugs and alcohol.
- Stay away from guns and other weapons. Tell an adult if you know someone has a gun. Access to guns is one of the leading risk factors for deadly violence.
- Violence is never a solution to personal problems. Students can be part of the positive solution by participating in anti-violence programs at school, learning conflict mediation skills, and seeking help from an adult if they or a peer is struggling with anger, depression, or other emotions they cannot control.

NASP has additional information for parents and educators on school safety, violence prevention, children's trauma reactions, and crisis response at www.nasponline.org.

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