

## Trail security called 'really sound'

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Summing up safety and security at Lackawanna Trail schools at a school board work session Monday night, Jan. 7, high school principal John Rushefski declared, "Our physical system is really sound."

The board planned an executive session after the meeting, but listed one item at the work session for public discussion: safety and security.

Superintendent Matthew Rakauskus said Trail administrators have been reviewing the safety and security of district schools since the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut last December, and "there are some things we can talk about in public."

"Our main concern has been to make sure all of our safety and security policies are in place," Rakauskus explained. "Most of this concerns physical security, especially making sure doors are locked when they're supposed to be."

He added that the district has a good relationship with state police, as well as a commitment from the Overfield Twp. Police to assist with security issues.

"Students may have noticed an increased presence at the school of law enforcement in recent weeks," Rakauskus said. "We don't want seeing armed police officers in the school to seem abnormal to students. We hope it will make them feel more secure."

Maintenance director Rick Kordish told the board that school doors are not unlocked until 7:15 a.m., and no one can enter before that.

"Doors are locked again at 7:45," he said, "and anyone going in and out during the day will be stopped if they have not been properly identified."

He added that a 'walk-through' of the schools and school grounds was conducted with Wyoming County Emergency Management to review the security of the school buildings.

"They even suggested we remove all garbage cans from the outside of our building," he said. "Garbage cans are someplace where someone can put something that doesn't belong there."

Mark Murphy, assistant high school principal, addressed the involvement of students in the security and safety process.

"We have stressed to students not to open doors for visitors under any circumstances," he explained. "We have also revised our sign-in sheets and hall passes to reflect more details about visitors, like who they are in the school to see and where they are going. They should have a visible pass with them at all times, and staff and faculty should be aware of anyone with a pass and that they have the appropriate information."

Elementary school principal Tania Stoker said she is making sure that all people delivering services to the school are escorted to their destination by a school maintenance worker.

"We're urging all of our staff to be more vigilant," she added. "Our monitors have walkie-talkies with them at recess, and we regularly practice emergency lock-down drills, as well as on-site and off-site evacuations. We are also reviewing our dismissal policy for students leaving detentions or returning from field trips, rather than having students just disperse when they leave without being escorted."

She also said that mental health services for students are now being offered at both the elementary and high school.

Rakauskus concluded the security discussion with the assurance that all staff members are being urged to have a presence in the halls and be observant of all entrances to school buildings.

In other business, Rushefski conducted a power point presentation offering an overview of recently-completed revisions and updates to the junior and senior high school curriculum guides for the 2013-14 school year.

He indicated there were no significant changes to the seventh and eighth grade guidelines.

At the high school level, most changes were focused on enhancing course offerings designed to assist students with the Keystone Exams, which includes advanced placement courses in history, government and English.

"We eliminated general biology," he explained. "It offered nothing that would help students on the Keystones. Honors biology and biology I are still in place, and earth and space Science are offered as electives for juniors and seniors."

He said general business courses have been eliminated from the Math curriculum due to budget cuts, but a personal finance course has been kept in the course offering.

"We felt with the economy the way it is," he said, "this particular course would be very helpful for students for their own financial planning in the future."

Murphy interjected that business courses are available for students interested in that field through the cooperative program at Elk Lake High School. It was also reiterated that Trail continues its partnership with Keystone College, which offers advanced placement courses to Trail students at \$75 per credit.

At the regular board meeting on Jan. 14, the board will consider the approval of the revised curriculum guides, as well as: adoption of the 'Relations with School-Affiliated Organizations' policy, and the appointment of an assistant track coach and a full-time maintenance position.