

AUGUSTA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Dr. Eric W. Bond
Division Superintendent

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December 14, 2015

Dear Parents,

A lot of conversations have surfaced recently in the news and social media regarding school security. I would like to explain to you our ongoing efforts in keeping our schools secure and safe. Please understand, however, the Augusta County School Board believes discussions regarding detailed specifications of our security measures should not be conducted via the World Wide Web and local media, and the School Board does not want to compromise the integrity of our security systems and safety procedures.

The School Board and school administration appreciate and understand the concerns of our parents regarding school security. Providing a safe environment for our students and our staff is of the utmost importance. We currently have specific safety procedures in place, and our teachers and administrators work tirelessly to ensure that our students are receiving an outstanding education in a safe and nurturing environment. Our safety procedures and protocol are based on the Model School Crisis Management Plan from the Department of Education and is included in the Augusta County Public Schools' Crisis & Emergencies Handbook. Administrators, teachers, staff, and students routinely practice various drills as prescribed within our handbook. Fire drills, tornado drills, school lock-down drills for intruder/hostage situations, and bus evacuation drills are just a few examples of these. Evaluations of drills and procedures are reviewed annually and adjustments are made accordingly.

All doors are locked with the exception of one front door (there are exceptions based on the designs of certain buildings). Faculty and staff monitor all activities inside and out of the buildings.

Additionally, Augusta County Public Schools cooperates and partners with the Augusta County Sheriff's School Resource Officer (SRO) Team and the Augusta County Emergency Call Center (ECC). The school division also provides a Knox Box System for law enforcement, and fire and rescue personnel, and utilizes a surveillance camera system in several of our schools. All of our schools utilize a computerized guest check-in system for parents and visitors.

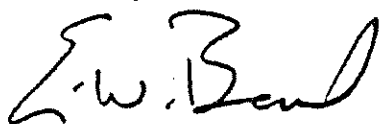
Two years ago, Augusta County Public Schools established a Safety Audit Committee comprised of parents, teachers, building administrators, central office staff, and community agencies (Sheriff's deputy, building inspector, and ECC personnel). This committee tours our facilities and prioritizes and makes recommendations to the School Board for improvements to our buildings. Based on those recommendations, we have written and received School Security Equipment Grants from the Virginia Department of Education for the past two years. Those grants have been used specifically to enhance and improve the security of our schools in the forms of surveillance camera systems, classroom emergency call switches, improved intercom systems, and two-way radios.

Additionally, the administration has been and is currently in the process of communicating and working with the Supervisor of the School Resource Officer Program (Sheriff's Office), members of the School Board and the Board of Supervisors, the County Government Administration, and local vendors to formulate viable enhancements that will improve our current security measures and protocol. Some of those enhancements include surveillance cameras for all elementary schools and "buzz-in" systems for our schools. On November 18, 2015, conversations specific to the "buzz-in" system for the front doors of our buildings began. As of today, procurement documents have been distributed to local security vendors. We will receive official quotes from those vendors on December 18, 2015.

Augusta County Public Schools remains committed to providing a quality education for all students. In doing so, we have provided your children with competent, caring staff members who are dedicated to every child, every day. As your superintendent, I strongly encourage you to contact your child's teacher, principal, me, or your school board representative when you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's education.

In closing, as we approach our winter break, I'd like to wish everyone a safe and restful holiday season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric W. Bond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Eric W. Bond, Ed.D.
Division Superintendent