

Four County School Boards Association
Presentation November 15th
On School Safety and Security

“An ounce of prevention
is worth a pound of
cure.”

– Benjamin Franklin
The Pennsylvania Gazette
February 4, 1735

In the unsettling aftermath of school shootings in the U.S. during the last few decades, studies sadly have revealed that in many cases there were, in fact, reports of threats made by the perpetrator that were largely ignored.

But in other cases, by investigating and determining the legitimacy of a threat, potential violence was averted.

A proactive approach to violence prevention that is becoming a more widely used and effective practice in schools throughout the nation to augment standard safety and reactive measures is the mechanism of threat assessment that enables school officials to determine if a threat is serious and take appropriate action ranging from counseling and other needed intervention measures to avoid conflict escalation. Threat assessments also help properly trained school officials determine threats that are not serious but transient in nature.

During her first 100 days of becoming acquainted and listening as the new Superintendent of the Newark Central School District in 2021, Susan Hasenauer realized enhancing safety and security, *particularly in terms of bullying and harassment*, was hands-down her first priority if students and staff were to **truly** feel comfortable in their learning environment.

She said the essential question before the district then became: How can we

proactively enhance school safety and security through a multi-tiered, holistic approach?

At the Four County School Boards Association's "School Safety and Security" meeting November 15th, Hasenauer shared in an in-depth presentation she made along with Julia Solan, NCSD UPK-12 Family Outreach & Community Schools Coordinator; Jose Otero, NCSD Director of Security and Steve Chatterton, Director of Security at Greece CSD who also works part-time for *At Risk International*, on how the NCSD came to employ a multi-faceted approach to violence prevention including the implementation of a Behavioral Threat Assessment Team Model as a way to enhance building safety and security measures.

The process began with the NCSD retaining *At Risk International* to conduct a thorough audit of the school district's emergency response plans as well as their resources and capability to respond to emergency situations. In its wake, many changes have ensued including the enhancement of both district-wide and building level emergency response plans to ensure consistency among all five schools; staff readiness to handle emergencies through extensive training; and local and state compliance.



Above left: Susan Hasenauer, Steve Chatterton, Julia Solan and Jose Otero



Understanding that safety and security hinges on both things and people, meaning the vulnerability of the facility, the cohesiveness of clearly defined systems and structures and being able to proactively intervene and mitigate potential acts of violence, bullying and harassment, the following have also been implemented to add to the all-inclusive approach, including:

- Increased emphasis on the social and emotional health of students and staff.
- Revamping the district's Code of Conduct.
- Training groups of students and staff to be leaders in restorative practices through Partners in Restorative Initiatives (PiRi).
- Training of District Policy 6180 focused on ethical and professional relationships between students and staff.
- Instituting *ParentSquare*, an effective and secure communication vehicle connecting schools, teachers, students and families.
- Utilizing *Navigate 360*, a digital safety and communication system which accounts for students and staff during emergency situations and evacuations.

And, without doubt, one of the most beneficial integrations has been the implementation of a 24-hour anonymous, safe school helpline that is not just for reporting threatening behavior, harassment or bullying, but a place for individuals feeling depressed or suicidal to receive counseling and other intervention services 24/7.

"Our focus was on where we may be vulnerable and how to fix it," Hasenauer said. "Our team has put a lot of work and effort into this. We know this is not perfect. It's a work in progress and we will make changes as needed. However, we've put in place a structure that allows us to be proactive rather than reactive."

Chatterton later said the changes Newark has implemented have put the district in the top 5 percent of districts in the state in terms of safety and security practices.



Left: Panelists from left: Wayne County Sheriff Robert Milby, Anne McGinnis, Esq., John Kelly, Hasenauer, Matt Miraglia and Heather Harer. Standing in the back is Michael Pullen, who moderated the panel discussion.

After commending the NCSD team for “setting the bar” on proactive safety and security practices in the region, North Rose-Wolcott Superintendent Michael Pullen shared how his district this year has greatly enhanced its communication capabilities for students and staff with a new TAP (Touch Alert Protect) app.

“When it comes to keeping kids and staff safe, I won’t apologize if this sounds like a sales pitch,” he said.

Pullen also moderated an informative panel discussion that included:

- Wayne County Sheriff Robert Milby who spoke about the important role of the School Resource Officers in the modern school setting.
- Former school psychologist and Harris Beach Attorney Anne McGinnis, Esq. who discussed the Red Flag Law and implications for schools and their Threat Assessment teams.
- Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES Coordinator of Safety and Security John Kelly who spoke of the need for clear and consistent safety plans throughout the region.
- President/CEO of CLPS Consultants Matt Miraglia, the founder of the TAP app who spoke about how to improve communication in a time of crisis.
- Hasenauer who spoke of the challenges of leading a district and balancing safety, security and learning in an ever-changing educational environment.
- Vice President of Strategic Partnerships at IntraLogic Solutions, Heather Harer who spoke about protecting schools with cutting-edge technology.

Russ Harris, President of the Four County School Boards Association, gave the event and the presenters high marks.

“Safety and security are on everyone’s minds. This is a very important conversation and must be ongoing. School security in 2022 must exceed cutting-edge technology and address the human component. I was so pleased with the wide range of expertise shared by the presenters and panelists.

Steve Miskell, Executive Director of the Four County School Boards Association, echoed Harris’ sentiments.

“I thought that the presentation on “School Safety and Security” was a tremendous success. Superintendents Susan Hasenauer and Michael Pullen really “knocked it out of the park” with their presentations, and the panel of experts in the field comprised of Superintendent Hasenauer, Superintendent Pullen, Wayne County Sheriff Robert Milby, John Kelly, Anne McGinnis, Esq., Dr. Matthew Miraglia, and Heather Harer provided thoughtful and informative responses to questions posed by members of the audience.

“As successful as the event was, we really just scratched the surface with regard to how much information Superintendents Hasenauer and Pullen and our expert panel have to share about School Safety and Security. In the interest of time, the presenters left out a great deal of content that they were prepared to share. We plan to explore the issue of school safety and security in greater detail next spring, when all of the presenters and panelists who participated in the presentation on November 15 will be invited back, to present at our day-long spring conference on March 24, 2023.”