

(3/20/24 District Administrator's Corner Article)

The safety in our schools is a shared responsibility. Parents, educators, students, local police enforcement, medical professionals, and school policy makers must work together to create practices and policies that are realistic and relevant.

There are routine events in our schools that help with school safety. For example, drills must be conducted in our schools to meet requirements for school safety—monthly fire drills, tornado drills and active emergency drills are all ways we build in practices to be ready if the need arises. But it is much more complicated than that. It involves many layers of planning and additional actions to keep our schools safe.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice has developed a comprehensive system to help retain school safety (<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/office-school-safety/school-safety-resources>). Components include the following:

- Building and using threat assessments
- Discussing and implementing mental health supports for youth
- Strengthening physical building features
- Creating routine safety controls
- Building strong communication with emergency responders
- Shaping school climate to reduce violence

An informed, trained, and practiced staff plays a large role in influencing school safety, yet a comprehensive approach demands that schools examine physical safety improvements. While physical security improvements cannot prevent school violence, carefully designed infrastructure, when combined with an educated staff, can reduce severe problems and provide time for emergency intervention. It is important to understand the purpose and benefit of each improvement so it can be examined in the context of a comprehensive schoolwide safety program.

One of the areas being addressed in the renovations listed in the April 2 referendum is the design of our schools' main entrances. Visitors need to be invited into a main entrance where they can be screened prior to entry. This clearance should not be to a hallway, classroom or even foyer without clear, mandated screening. In other words, the visitor would have to enter any school's main office first where they would be subjected to the visitor protocol before proceeding further. In an ideal design, school staff would remotely unlock the door leading to the school for screened visitors...while unscreened visitors would encounter this locked door before gaining access into the school. The current design of our elementary and middle schools do not meet these recommendations.

Safety and security for our students and staff was an area highlighted by the Facilities Study Advisory Task Force this past year. As a matter of fact, it was elevated to the first topic listed on the "Goals For Success," a list of beliefs developed by local citizens ([see list here](#)). We can hope for a time when schools won't have to practice active shooter drills or develop emergency management for schools, but that leaves us ill prepared. Some will state that the district is trying to scare voters, yet informing the community is needed and required.

*For additional information on other plans and renovations that are being considered in the April 2 referendum, please contact Mr. Loren Glasbrenner, District Administrator, at (608) 588-2551 or [lglasbrenner@rvschools.org](mailto:lglasbrenner@rvschools.org) or visit the district website at*

*(<https://www.rvschools.org/district/referendum-2024.cfm>). All meetings and additional information have been posted.*

Sincerely,

Loren Glasbrenner, District Administrator  
River Valley School District