Sarasota County Schools’ 2019 Back 2 School Guide – Safety & Security

Sarasota County Schools continues to refine its security measures and to be vigilant about the safety of students and staff. Considerable time and effort goes into practicing safety and security. Below are examples of the kinds of measures incorporated in the comprehensive school safety strategy:

- Coordination and emergency planning with local law enforcement, police, fire, and safety officials
- Coordination with the Sarasota County Health Department
- Comprehensive safety plans for each school updated annually--plans include evacuation, shelter-in-place, parent communication
- On-going employee training
- Staff members designated to assist special needs students in an emergency/crisis
- Employee/visitor identification badges
- Reduced number of school doors accessible from the outside
- Emergency kits in every school ready for first responders in an emergency
- Crisis plans updated regularly to reflect the current climate and level of risk
- Crisis management teams in all schools
- Crisis intervention teams in all schools
- Status checks of emergency communication devices
- Regular maintenance and testing of security alarm systems
- Regular inspection of elevators
- Central control of air intake in all schools
- Staff trained in mail handling safety
- Fire safety drills conducted as required
- Defibrillators tested regularly
- Exit signs clearly marked and visible
- Entrances clearly marked with signs directing visitors to the main office
- Appropriate identification required of adults signing out students
- Bus loading/drop off areas monitored by staff

Sarasota County Schools Police Department

In May 2018, the Sarasota County School Board approved the adoption of a school-based police force – the Sarasota County Schools Police Department (SCSPD) – to partner with local law enforcement on an SRO program in traditional public schools across the district. The men and women who are a part of the SCSPD are FDLE certified. All the officers are highly trained, and most have extensive experience in law enforcement, which ensures compliance with the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act.

Going into the 2019-20 school year, there will be an SCSPD School Resource Officer (SRO) assigned to every tradition public school in Sarasota County. The district’s school-based police department will expand in both leadership and field staff this school year, and will include the following sworn law enforcement officers to meet personnel requirements:

- (1) Chief of Police
- (2) Lieutenants
- (6) Sergeants
• (5) Regional Response Officers
• (43) School Resource Officers

School Hardening

More than $23 million was allocated for school hardening in the 2018-19 school year, which included new perimeter fencing, single-point-entry access to all schools, new front office design that included bullet-resistant glass and metal frameworks, new locks and many more security cameras. In addition, the school district is installing new emergency alert systems in all traditional public schools over the coming year.

Safety Drills & Protocols

In addition to standard safety programs such as fire drills, the school district’s leaders revised security protocols to emphasize three types of safety emergencies, including lockdown, limited lockdown and evacuations. This replaced the color-coding system of Code Red, Code Orange, etc.

• A lockdown is a full closure of campus where students and staff seek shelter in school.
• A limited lockdown closes campus to outside visitors and instruction continues in class. Movement on campus is limited.
• An evacuation is when a classroom, building or school needs to close, and students are moved from one space to another.
• The school district has also empowered anyone on campus to call for a lockdown if they witness someone or something suspicious that could do harm.

Sarasota County Schools is employing on-going, district-wide lockdown drills to be conducted simultaneously at all schools, as well as random safety drills conducted at individual schools, to ensure students and staff know what to do in case of an emergency.

Help & Safety Resources

• FortifyFL APP – FortifyFL is a tool that allows you to instantly relay information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials. The APP provides students, parents and staff an anonymous way to report suspicious or concerning activity.
• 966-SAFE (7233) – A 24/7 help line monitored by the district’s Security Communications Center. Call any time to report suspicious behavior, or to have the team guide you to safety. While this should not be used in place of dialing 9-1-1, the Security Communications Center can connect with local law enforcement to secure resources and assistance.
• Partnership with Sandy Hook Promise Foundation – The district reinforces the “See Something, Say Something” mantra and encourages all students, staff and visitors to keep a lookout while they are coming and going from school campuses and district facilities. The district has also organized SAVE the Promise clubs (Students Against Violence Everywhere) in our secondary schools, and integrated safety intervention and assessment teams at every school through a partnership with the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation.
• Youth Mental Health First Aid training – Sarasota County Schools has partnered with the National Council for Behavioral Health and trained three new instructors as part of the Youth Mental Health First Aid program to enhance our faculty and staff’s ability to provide services to our students.
• **Crisis Text Line** – This has partnered with Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation on a Crisis Text Line – a free, 24/7 support system for those in crisis. Users can text HERE4U to 741741 from anywhere in the U.S. to instantly start a text conversation with a trained crisis counselor.

**Emergency Management**

School buildings in Sarasota County may be used to shelter residents who have been displaced from their homes due to natural or man-made disasters. The school district works with the Sarasota County Emergency Management Services and The American Red Cross to coordinate all activities related to handling disasters. The school district itself may, at times, have a need of school facilities for sheltering or relocation to temporarily meet internal district needs. Visit Sarasota County Government for more: SCGOV.net.