

Improve School Safety * Simple Improvements = Big Impact * All Stakeholders are Safer

Making Lafayette Christian School Safer Every Day

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I improved my school's safety for the applied school project. Keeping all stakeholders safe is a top priority. My school is in an area that is transitioning from a small town to a more urban city. I have a safety committee that meets once a month and reports to my school board. The committee is made up of a police officer (also a board member), a firefighter, a tech expert, two teachers, and myself. In Indiana our department of education offers a safety specialist training. Public schools are required to have one safety specialist for the corporation. My school has three. Two teachers and I are trained safety specialists.

The care and safety of children, faculty and staff are of the utmost importance. When dealing with topics of security and safety, the Committee carefully considers balancing the convenience of our families with the overall security and safety of those in the building. The Safety Committee hopes to foster a climate of strict adherence to our policies and procedures to create a protective environment within Lafayette Christian School. This group covers all areas of safety from building access, parking, playground, medical, infrastructure, and network security to name a few. I will share what I did through the safety committee to make Lafayette Christian School a safer place, what I learned, and what difference it is making in my school. This is an ongoing project. One I am excited about!

I. What Did You Do?

Specifically, I will list and give an explanation of various safety improvements that were made for the applied school project. One major blessing was being awarded a \$6,000 Homeland Security Matching Safety Grant which was matched by donors for a total of \$12,000. The grant will enhance the safety/security of our school facility by undertaking the following physical improvements:

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- Install an additional set of electronic access controlled doors at the main entrance. This will add an extra layer of protection and require visitors to stop at the office service window to sign in and be granted a guest credential prior to accessing the school.
- Upgrade and replace outdated door locks in the entire facility, and rekey the entire facility onto a new master key system, and implement strong key tracking procedures. The facility has not had a complete rekey in several decades and records of existing key holders are incomplete or outdated.
- Install shatter resistant film on entrance/classroom door windows and sidelights.
- Install additional cameras/DVRs as needed to fill out the school surveillance system and increase recording capabilities

The following safety improvements were not covered in the grant, but the safety committee was able to do the following:

- New carpet in several parts of the building. The old carpet was in really bad shape held together in some areas with duct tape. A generous donor paid for the carpet project. The new carpet will assist with having a healthy school free of mold, dirt, etc.
- Purchase and install identifying numbers and letters on the exterior of the school for each door and classroom. This will assist Public Safety should they need to respond to the school in an emergency situation.
- Install a card reader for door access at the glass door in the Brown Street lot. With this additional card reader, all exterior doors will have one.
- The school has entered into a contract to provide off-duty police officers for security at large events held at the school on an as needed basis.

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- Re-writing and updating the comprehensive safety plan for Lafayette Christian School based on current best practices.
- Provided fire extinguisher and fire prevention training to the faculty with members of the Lafayette Fire Department.
- Added two “panic” buttons that when hit the police will be automatically notified and all exterior doors will lock instantaneously.
- Added new signage to the Drop-Off/Pick-Up lane to remind driver’s never to use mobile devices while in the line with children so close.
- Committee has begun work to develop a Crisis Management/Response Team. This group would have resources available to contact should a situation happen where specialized services are needed.

Prior to initiating all this, the safety committee conducted a needs assessment to determine what projects to move forward with as priorities. These priorities were identified by a walk around site security survey performed by the school safety committee.

What Did You Learn?

- Grant writing is tedious, but worthwhile
- Working with firefighters and police officers is a rewarding experience as they share their knowledge and expertise
- All stakeholders are very appreciative of the hard work and effort put into making Lafayette Christian School a safer place
- Even though I may not know about something, many experts are willing to help with improving school safety
- How to think more like a potential “bad guy” and take steps to protect the school

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- Safety improvements do not always have to be expensive or time consuming
- It is very worthwhile to invest the time and money in to school safety.
- With the installation of additional cameras/DVRs as needed to fill out the school surveillance system and increase recording capabilities I learned about surveillance. Even if the cameras didn't catch something, student behavior has improved with just the potential threat of their behavior being caught on tape.
- The school has entered into a contract to provide off-duty police officers for security at large events held at the school on an as needed basis. I learned that more and more schools and churches are using off duty police officers. I also learned that they don't mind helping secure my school and look forward to helping.
- Re-writing and updating the comprehensive safety plan for Lafayette Christian School based on current best practices taught me about our current plan and how we could improve it by studying current practices. I learned where discrepancies in the plan was and where improvements needed to be made.
- I provided fire extinguisher and fire prevention training to the faculty with members of the Lafayette Fire Department. This was not only a fun experience using a fire extinguisher to put out a controlled fire, the staff and I learned how to use a fire extinguisher.
- Added clear signs to the Drop-Off/Pick-Up lane to remind driver's never to use mobile devices while in the line with children so close. I learned that more parents were using their cell phone that I thought during drop off/pick up. Clear signs helped remind parents to stay off their cell and pay attention to any potential dangerous situations like a student running in front of their car.

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- The committee has begun work to develop a Crisis Management/Response Team.

This group would have resources available to contact should a situation happen where specialized services are needed. As we work on this, I am learning about how this team would be utilized at school.

- I also learned that school safety is a wonderful marketing tool. As I interact with potential new families, donors, and stakeholders, they seem to really appreciate hearing about the school safety improvements happening.

I. What Difference Is It Making In Your School?

School safety is making a huge difference in my school. The second set of doors will be an additional layer that a possible intruder has to go through in order to gain access to the school. Having the school rekeyed and a thorough, organized key system will allow for a peace of mind knowing who has keys for the school. When seconds count, having shatter resistant glass may make all the difference. The “panic” button is a great addition. If a crisis situation occurs, this button could make all the difference. If a potential perpetrator approaches an entrance and someone sees them, they could hit the panic button and lock all exterior doors simultaneously. With clear numbers on all doors, this will assist first responders in a crisis situation know where doors and windows are located. We had two off duty police officers at our daddy/daughter dance. One dad, who had a restraining order and was not allowed at school for awhile, came to the dance. The restraining order expired and so legally he could attend. Potential problems were negated due to the presence of the officers.

All in all I am very thankful for having the opportunity to be a part of the Van Lunen Fellowship. This is an ongoing project, one I am passionate about. I appreciate the positive impact the Van Lunen Fellowship has had on my servant leadership growth.