



**Washoe County School District  
Consultant for Safe and Healthy Schools  
Initiative**

**Executive Summary**

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**Executive Summary**

**This Executive Summary is being provided to the Washoe County School District (WCSD or District) Police Department as a part of the District's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). It is our understanding that pursuant to Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 388.245, the District must update its EOP on an annual basis. We further understand that the Board of Trustees on October 11, 2016 voted to begin the process of updating the EOP. As a result, we are providing this report to the School Police Department in order to assist with updating the EOP. This report is confidential pursuant to NRS 388.259 and NRS 239.**

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**CAVEAT**

*Recommendations in this Executive Summary reflect the School Safety Advocacy Council understanding of the state of security at the Washoe County School District at the time of our initiative. We recognize that security, safety, emergency management and crime prevention/reduction strategies are dynamic processes. As the District functions or activities change or facility conditions are modified or expanded, some of the assumptions made during this review process will also change. Therefore, security process management, technology, policies and procedures should be routinely reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the environment and the expectations of the community.*

*Although we believe the recommendations contained in this Executive Summary are reasonable and appropriate, the School Safety Advocacy Council cannot provide legal guidance or advice. Therefore, we recommend that legal counsel be sought, if indicated, before policies or programs are changed or implemented.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The goal of this report is to synthesize the information gathered from the Washoe County School District during the Consultant for Safe and Healthy School Initiative. As a result of the information collected, The School Safety Advocacy Council developed an expert opinion about the key challenges associated with keeping the District safe. The School Safety Advocacy Council examined all the available evidence on current District safety measures and procedures, and is proud to present an expert view of the needs and limits of current safety solutions and other safety practices.

The Washoe County School District should be commended for understanding that a comprehensive district-wide evaluation should be conducted before implementing or purchasing any school safety improvements. When considering which school safety and security recommendations to select, it is important for the administration to use all the available information to justify and document the decision. With the intent to provide the District with as much information as possible, this evaluation drew from a number of approaches, parent forums, staff interviews, staff focus groups, school safety assessments, document and MOU reviews, and climate survey analyses.

Decisions about whether to invest in school security improvements for the Washoe County School District are complex and must take into account a variety of logistical, economic, and political factors. Security improvements, such as those referenced in this report, provide numerous solutions that the District can adopt to enhance student, visitor, and staff safety. Although security measures are often crisis-driven, the District should consider the following items before acquiring and implementing the safety improvements:

- A positive school climate is crucial to fostering learning; security should not create a prison-like atmosphere or generate additional fears.
- Policy cannot compensate for inherent building design weaknesses.
- Without training, school safety improvements can be ineffective. WCSD21
- Without the appropriate culture, school safety measures can be jeopardized.
- School safety improvement should focus on addressing a specified problem.

It must be understood that full implementation of the recommendations included in this report cannot guarantee that Washoe County's campuses or the surrounding areas will be crime-free or totally safe without threats. Rather, this document is meant to assist in reducing the potential for incidents by providing a "roadmap" for enhancing the effectiveness of security resources by improving training and staff awareness of potential problems and further implementing security improvements. However, the

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School Advocacy Council believes that security equipment is only one part of the District's total security "system".

Additional components of the overall security strategy must include the application of existing policies, procedures and processes, the selection, recruitment and retention of trained staff, proper staff supervision, communication and collaboration with the administration and other stakeholders, and law enforcement involvement.

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**ABOUT THE SCHOOL SAFETY ADVOCACY COUNCIL**

The School Safety Advocacy Council (SSAC) was established with the goal of providing the highest quality school safety training and services to school districts, law enforcement agencies and communities. The Council strives to expand beyond a singular approach of relying on law enforcement as the only solution to school violence and transition to a cooperative approach which includes all of the educational stakeholders.

With Curtis Lavarello as the Executive Director and Sean Burke as the President, the School Safety Advocacy Council has become the recognized leader in school safety services and training. The Council is currently the host of the largest conference in the nation addressing all aspects of school safety, the National School Safety Conference, as well as the National Conference on Bullying, both conferences draw professionals in their respective fields from all over the world. The Council also hosts the National Executive Leadership Academy on School Safety, which is attended by management-level professionals from education and law enforcement from across the nation.

In addition to the national conferences, the School Safety Advocacy Council works in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice and its centers, the Justice Technology Information Center and the Small Rural Tribal Boarder Center, to provide training and services to school districts and law enforcement agencies nationwide. In an effort to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information to education and law enforcement, SSAC works to develop technology and initiatives with the U.S. Department of Justice and its centers on addressing current school safety needs.

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## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The Washoe County Schools Consultant for the Safe and Healthy Schools Initiative was divided into three phases: Information Collection, Recommendation and Implementation, and Review and Presentation. These phases guided the process and ensured the effective achievement of the goals set forth in the scope of work.

### ***Phase1: Information Collection***

This was the most important phase of the project and is the cornerstone for all recommendations or actions going forward. It was imperative to be as thorough in all information-gathering efforts so that as many stakeholders as possible were involved in the process.

For the purpose of this project, the School Safety Advocacy Council was not solely attempting to collect negative opinions or safety areas in need of improvement, but also making a concerted effort to identify the positive efforts and initiatives the District has implemented. In any accurate assessment of school safety, it is just as important to recognize the positive efforts as it is the negative ones in an attempt to improve.

### ***Phase2: Recommendations and Implementation***

In this phase of the project, all of the collected information was synthesized, reports and deliverables were completed and submitted to the District. Reports detailing the information collected of positive school safety initiatives and areas of concern were created and sub-divided by department and/or initiative. This format allows the team to meet with any department or individual necessary to discuss the findings and recommendations.

One of the deliverables, using information from the project, is a district-specific school safety assessment tool that the district-and-school-level staff will be able to use to conduct assessments of any school or district building. This tool allows the District to develop an accurate view of safety and related factors at each of their schools and provide guidelines and suggestions for improvements.

### ***Phase 3: Review and Presentation***

In this phase, all of the individual reports, findings, recommendations, policies and procedures, deliverables, and evaluation components were combined into a single comprehensive report on the initiative. This report is reflective of and provides a pathway to accomplish the strategic goals of Envision WCSD 2020 of the Washoe County School District. A comprehensive final report will be presented and discussed with the Safe and Healthy Schools Commission, Board of Trustees, and school administration.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### **Emergency Operations Plan**

The Washoe County School District, the Office of Emergency Management and its director, Jim Hendrickson, have developed an effective emergency operation plan that promotes the safety and welfare of the District while regulating its operation during a crisis incident or medical emergency.

The Washoe County School District has designed a multi-hazards approach to emergency planning and has adopted the national standard command and management structure, National Incident Management System (NIMS), and is thereby better prepared to mount a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis or critical incident does occur. The U.S. Department of Education and U. S. Department of Homeland Security recommend that school districts adopt NIMS and the Incident Command System (ICS) as their standards for incident management. The Washoe County School District has embraced NIMS and ICS, which enables them to coordinate the management of incidents and emergencies with local emergency responders using standardized sets of concepts, principles, and terminology. This coordination of management provides for a more effective transfer of authority, acquisition of resources, and communications during a school emergency.

### **SCHOOL SAFETY ASSESSMENTS**

The School Safety Advocacy Council completed a number of school safety assessments and developed a data-driven justification for matching a problem to a potential solution(s). The objective of a school safety assessment is to gather, analyze, and communicate information about threats, likelihood, assets, vulnerabilities, and consequences in a way that allows school officials to decide what actions to take. Actions are intended to create a level of protection that reduces the vulnerabilities to threats and their potential consequences, thereby reducing risk.

A school safety assessment is useful in determining the potential impacts of threats and hazards to the assets in an individual school, or across a district. The school safety assessment can provide the foundation and justification for identifying and prioritizing actions, including modification to existing safety and security initiatives. No matter the method used, the end result should be a prioritized list of security improvements for the school. School officials should review their identified needs and assign prioritization, keeping in mind limits imposed by local and school mandates, political and parental concerns, and, lastly, police and local fire department professional judgment and advice.

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**Finding:** Effective access control and security efforts begin at the perimeter of the school and its property. A robust fence defines school boundaries and forces a perpetrator to consciously trespass rather than allowing idle wandering onto a campus that has no fencing. Appropriately considered fence implementation can potentially deter, delay, and/or prevent unauthorized access and criminal activity.

### Single Point Entry (Mantraps)

**Finding:** It is recommended that all Washoe County School District buildings adopt the use of a single-point-entry system with a mantrap. Mantraps are personnel access-control devices that feature a secured space equipped with two or more interlocking doors and a personnel detection system to ensure only one person (or a limited number of people) at a time can pass through into the school. The mantrap tends to be designed like an air lock—a visitor enters through exterior doors, passes into a secured vestibule with locked (bullet-resistant) doors at the other end, and exits into the school through the locked doors once they are screened and access is granted.

Because mantraps require specific designs for each individual school or building, they are also highly customizable. Although the main function of a mantrap is to ensure only one person (or specified quantity of people) at a time is screened prior to being permitted access, this can be accomplished using a number of integrated technologies such as electronic access cards, cameras, metal detectors, computer systems, and biometric access devices.

### School Visitor Management

**Finding:** The District should mandate a single standardized electronic-visitor management system. The system should be capable of replacing manual paper-based logs, and allow schools and facilities to produce visitor badges, provide student tardy and hall passes and electronically check visitors against known sexual predator and offender databases. The standardization and policy on visitor management will better control access to Washoe County School District schools and facilities and provide enhanced protection for students and staff.

### Secure Classrooms

**Finding:** Classroom function locksets have been standard for classroom doors. A key cylinder is located on the outside of the door. When the door is locked, no one can enter the classroom, but those inside the classroom can exit unimpeded. If the door is unlocked and a school lockdown occurs, however, the teacher must open the door, step into the hallway, lock the door, step back inside the classroom, and close the door.

Washoe County School District should install classroom security function locksets that have a key cylinder to the classroom side of the door so that the door can be locked without leaving the room. The locks selected should be able to be unlocked from the inside by applying pressure to the handle, and they should meet applicable life safety and fire codes to allow emergency evacuation.

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### Student Off-Site Evacuation Location

**Finding:** There are two primary types of evacuations utilized by schools. One is the typical on-site evacuation, where students and staff are evacuated from the school building to a safe location on the school grounds. The most common on-site evacuation is a fire drill where students are directed to leave the building and assemble at a safe location at least 50 feet from the building.

The second type is off-site evacuation, where students and staff are moved off school grounds to another location for their safety. An off-site evacuation should require authorization from school administration to facilitate the coordination and mobilization of resources required for such movement. Off-site evacuation may require bus transportation, or the school population may be able to walk to the off-site evacuation location. If walking to the off-site location is the preferred option, faculty, staff, visitors, students and individuals with disabilities and special needs must be able to complete the walk, or have alternative arrangements made to transport them to evacuation site.

Schools should designate two off-site evacuation locations: a primary location which may also be the designated off-site parent reunion area and an alternate location that can be used until students are transported to an off-site parent reunion area, or dismissed from the off-site location. Students should never be released from any evacuation area but only released from the parent reunion area where proper student accounting and release procedures can be conducted.

### Parent Reunification Area

**Finding:** During school incidents the arrival of parents at the school may disrupt the efforts of those dealing with the crisis. To allay parents' concerns and curtail unnecessary response to the school, timely and accurate information about the incident should be provided via the District's mass-notification and communications systems.

The parent reunification area is the central location where parents can assemble; school staff can begin the process of reuniting students with their parents; and parents can be provided with information about the school emergency. A well-organized parent reunification area and preplanned student release process will reunite parents and students in an orderly and accountable fashion.

### Staff School Safety and Emergency Management Professional Development

**Finding:** The school District should develop and implement a professional development program focused on building employee capacity in the area of school safety and emergency management. A professional development program, delivered online and/or in person, with content developed by subject-matter experts will support and enhance the capacity of the school District and its schools to provide a safe and orderly learning environment for students.

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Recognizing and responding to a crisis takes practice. The more a plan is practiced, reviewed and improved, the better that plan will be implemented. In addition to the District's required drills/training, the District's administration and school staff should continue to review the roles, responsibilities, relationships, communication strategies and resources that would be critical, should an actual crisis occur.

### Campus Door Numbering

**Finding:** The rapid response of emergency responders to an incident at a school can be critical. Most schools assessed had dozens of doors providing entrance and egress to their buildings. During an emergency it may be necessary for responders to gain access through the door closest to the emergency scene. Numbering external doors can be extremely valuable to emergency responders and will, also, assist students and staff in acclimating themselves to door locations in case of an emergency.

### School Key Controls

**Finding:** Because all locks have an associated key, access-control vulnerability is introduced when key distribution and key access is not properly controlled. For this reason, the school district should develop policy and procedures to keep an accurate and current account of those individuals who have keys to areas on school property. Master keys and spare keys should be separately secured to prevent unauthorized people from taking keys. Additionally, records of key access and ownership should be regularly maintained to ensure that locks can be rekeyed in the event of key loss or misplacement.

## **STAFF INTERVIEWS AND DEPARTMENT REVIEWS**

### ***School Police Department***

The Washoe County School District Police Department is headed by Chief Jason Trevino. The agency serves as a fully commissioned law enforcement agency within the state of Nevada.

The mission of the Washoe County School Police Department is to provide a safe and secure learning environment, which promotes an atmosphere of trust between the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural school community and the police department. Working hand in hand with local, county, state and federal agencies, the Washoe County School District Police Department is committed to eliminating violence, weapons, substance abuse, vandalism and other hazards from its schools.

### ***Office of Emergency Management***

The Office of Emergency Management is a division of the police department tasked with “a wide variety of functions in order to create a more resilient school community in the event of an emergency or crisis that might affect our students, staff and schools.” The director and only staff member of this office is Jim Hendrickson, who by job description, coordinates the District’s emergency plans and crisis response, trains district personnel in the emergency response procedures, conducts drills and exercises, and plans and implements enhanced safety programs.

### ***Safe and Healthy Schools Commission***

The Safe and Healthy Schools Commission’s purpose is to advise the Board of Trustees on issues relating to the safety and security of schools, which may include prevention/intervention, mitigation, preparedness, emergency response, and recovery. This is done by reviewing District policies and procedures in these areas against national best standards and recommending changes to policies and procedures.

The establishment of the Safe and Healthy Schools Commission by the Washoe County Board of Trustees confirms the board and District’s dedication to safety and security. The Commission, with the establishment of the multi-year Consultant for Safe and Healthy Schools Initiative, has shown a strong commitment to improving all aspect of safety and security inside the District. In all of the dealings with the Commission, the members have consistently displayed the utmost concern for the safety of staff, students, and visitors of the District.

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***Student Services and Equity and Diversity***

- It is recommended that that District expand restorative practices, which are grant funded and currently still in the pilot stage throughout the district.
- Department has challenge providing mental health services and follow up due to district limitations. Department should research the feasibility of contracting mental health services with outside public or private agency.
- Department finds principals not following behavior matrix and reverting to zero tolerance policies. School level administration training should be provided to reinforce use of behavior matrix and need for constant district-wide services.
- Continue with goal of all staff receiving cultural training by 2020 and establishing ongoing training program for reinforcement

***Information Technology***

- Department has a concern over its lack of input on vendor selection. Process should be adopted to include IT in vendor and product selection.
- Department states all upgraded Cisco phones can be programed to call 911 without requiring the dialing of 9 first, and that other existing phone systems in district would have to be examined to determine if it was possible. District should immediately mandate Cisco phones be reprogrammed to eliminate the need to dial 9 prior to 911, and that IT begin researching the other phone systems to do the same. District should, also, launch district-wide educational program for staff and students on 911 dialing procedures.
- Access control to IT department and storage area of administration building should be upgraded.
- WCSD21 plan contains a 1:1 technology-rollout plan that has not begun implementation. Extensive planning on student-digital-citizenship training, device security and storage should be conducted prior to purchase and disbursement of devices.
- District should develop policy for mobile-device storage and security that is currently on a school-by-school basis.

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***Student Health Services***

- Ideally, each school would have its own full-time RN, but department should continue current efforts to reduce the number of schools a nurse must service to two schools.
- District should look to expand hours of clinical aides in middle schools from 5.5 to 6 to facilitate better coverage.
- Department should expand efforts to digitize student records and move away from paper records to improve remote access by nurses.
- Nurses should be part of all-crisis teams and involved in emergency planning.

***Food Services***

- Currently cafeteria staff relies on school-based emergency training. An annual department-specific emergency training program should be established.
- All cafeteria delivery doors should have fish-eyed viewers (peepholes) installed.

***Transportation***

- Student rosters and daily count should be moved from paper to an electronic format.
- Conduct a security assessment of all bus compounds.

***Facility Management***

- Continue the policy that once the facilities office identifies and confirms the emergency status of a maintenance request, an emergency crew is immediately dispatched to the school, and the issue is quickly corrected.
- The department identified a security concern with the current school public address (PA) systems at many of the schools. District should consult with Rauland Borg, sole district vendor, to improve school PA systems.
- Facilities staff does not receive any department-specific emergency management training and should receive training in an annual training program, either online or in person.
- Department receives no requests for signage improvements at schools, even though lack of signage has been identified as an area of improvement
- Department reports that it receives numerous requests for campus rekeying that they do not have the capabilities to fulfill with only one locksmith. The department does not have staff to monitor key procedures, or district policy to follow.

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***Human Resources / General Counsel / Human Resources***

- District should improve or look to add another process for providing on-line, school-safety training to district staff, as current system is inadequate.

***External Partners***

- A cross-training program on mass casualties, triage etc. should be established to better prepare for emergency situations and insure continuity of care.
- External partners should be involved once District establishes tabletop exercises and full-crisis drill schedule.
- District should include external partners in emergency-response training to facilitate and clarify roles during an incident.

**General Findings and Recommendations:**

- Non-school based staff should receive specific crisis response training within their departments to be prepared for an event, if they are on campus.
- Provide all school administration staff with training on investigating bullying that is compliant with Nevada law.
- District should develop a district-wide policy on use of single-point-entry system.
- Standardize all emergency and security policies and procedures district-wide to facilitate similar responses in all schools and buildings.

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### District Staff Focus Groups

By conducting four focus groups, the School Safety Advocacy Council was able to reveal detailed information and deep insight into the perception of safety within Washoe County Schools. The focus groups created an accepting environment that put participants at ease and allowed them to thoughtfully answer questions in their own words. Unlike surveys that are effective for collecting information about people's attributes and attitudes, the focus group allowed SSAC to gain a better understanding of participant's perceptions with more detail and insight.

### Findings:

- There was very high praise and numerous accolades given to the District police department, the job they perform, and the officers. There was also numerous mention of the responsiveness of Chief Trevino to concerns or issues from district staff. The concerns that all groups mentioned were that more officers were needed to cover middle schools, and that they hoped adding officers to middle schools would also increase police presence in the elementary schools.
- All relevant staff members had concerns over the lack of bullying training in response to the recent state law, and how much time of their day was taken conducting bullying investigations. Of their lack of training concerns, conducting bullying investigations was the most prevalent requested.
- Staff members, who worked at more than one school discussed the lack of standardization and consistency in school safety and emergency-management efforts between schools. It was strongly felt that the District should take more of a lead in security issues.
- All staff members voiced support over the current District initiatives of single-point entry, perimeter fencing, and door locks, and they agreed on the need for a visitor-management system and access control.
- A number of staff in the focus groups felt that more parental notification was needed, and they voiced a concern over the effectiveness and reliability of Blackboard Connect; stories were related of Blackboard Connect failures.

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## **PARENT AND COMMUNITY FORUMS**

In cooperation with the District, the School Safety Advocacy Council participated in a series of four parent and community public meetings on school safety. The forums were held in various geographic locations throughout the county to facilitate differing ideas and have as many parents as possible attend. The gathering of information from parents during the forums and in private conversations after the event, allowed the School Safety Advocacy Council to discover actual safety conditions and the perception of safety in their child's school.

### **Parent and Community Forum Locations**

North Valleys High School

Spanish Springs High School

McQueen High School

Galena High School

Members of the School Safety Advocacy Council participated in parent and community forums at the above four locations in the District. The District had a full panel representing most District departments attend each forum and had each forum video recorded to enable it to be played at a later date on the District access channel. Similar to what is seen in other districts nationally, there was a relatively low turnout of community members and parents. However, those who did attend had strong feelings on certain issues and were quite vocal.

The following information, concerns and comments were taken from the four parent and community forums.

- Concerns were raised over the lack of post-incident parental notification of lockdowns or campus incidents.
- The work of the school police and Chief Trevino was praised at all of the forums. An issue constantly mentioned was the addition of officers at the middle schools.
- The project and outside audit process was seen as a very positive step forward by attendees of forums, once it was announced and explained to them.

## **CLIMATE SURVEY REVIEW**

Three years of data were reviewed and analyzed to look for trends, specify district strengths and areas of growth as it relates to school climate in the Washoe County School District. Using the school climate survey distributed to all staff, students, and families in the last three school years (2014, 2015, and 2016), there were numerous areas of strength that should be highlighted. However, some areas of growth were identified and it is recommended to dig deeper into the data through the use of a qualitative approach as opposed to the current use of quantitative data. For example, using the quantitative data presented and based on the recommendations in this summary report, the District would benefit from interviewing key target audiences that can deepen the understanding of the areas of concern identified.

### ***Student Survey***

The student surveys (2014, 2015, and 2016) indicated that the majority of students felt safe during school and en route to and from school. This is a positive outcome to the work that is being done at WCSD. Students also believed that the adults in their buildings respected them, support them, and care about their progress.

WCSD offers a student voice conference which is now in its third year. This conference gives students the ability to have their voice heard in a forum that embraces open dialog. Last year, 139 middle and high school students attended the conference with 32 staff members. It is unclear what marketing was used to promote the programming or how students were selected but it would be beneficial for WCSD to expand this valuable collaboration with seeking students who can become leaders in their own schools.

Evidence was presented that the majority of students (more than 75%) would stand up for someone being teased. This is an indicator that students have learned skills to advocate for others and helps lend to a positive school environment. It was also noted that adults in the building care for the students. Students did indicate that they had been either teased or threatened in some way (55% in 2014, 54% in 2015). The student voice campaign could possibly be used as a springboard to engage conversations on how to change the behaviors of those students that victimize others. There was evidence that the Secret Witness program was not known by more than 50% of the student population in each of the years reviewed.

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### *Considerations*

- Increase participation of the student voice program and create a by-school feeder program that goes into the larger district. This program should occur more than once per year as a way of reviewing the data presented and creating solutions that are student driven.
- Re-examine the purpose of the Secret Witness and determine if it is something to continue or if there are other ways to promote and report incidents anonymously.
- Determine if student handbook and/or codes of conduct are articulated on school buses and if school bus personnel understand what those expectations are prior to being hired. Involve school bus personnel in professional development opportunities to make them a part of the larger school community.
- Create school based focus teams for students that can identify causes and effects of the areas of concern and determine an action plan to address them.

### ***Parent Survey***

Parents overall believe the school is a supportive place for their child. This is evidenced by the responses over the past three years. Staff is viewed as friendly and welcoming to parents and there appears to be trust between parents and staff based on the survey results. Further, over 80% of respondents stated the Principal was available, courteous, and responsive to them. As a result, parents were happy with the communication with the school across all roles. At the high school level, however, it was stated that over multiple years, nearly 25% of parents felt the Principal was not professional in their communication with them.

Over the past three surveys, the majority of parents (86-87%) believe their child is receiving a quality education. Most parents felt that teachers are able to differentiate instruction based on the needs of their child and that there are high expectations for learning. 88-89% of parents felt that communication between parents and teachers was effective. However, there appears to be a trend with Native American parents (Black and Multi-racial closely behind them) in the middle and high schools that have a lower perception of effective communication from teachers than any other race.

Caring adults are prevalent in the school district with over 89% of parents on average reporting adults care. Parents believe that their child is treated fairly regardless of race, cultural background or family status. 25% of high school parents felt that behavioral expectations were not the same. Without reviewing suspension rates and discipline data, it is unclear if it is due to student consequences or a lack of clarity in the

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expectations. Further research is necessary to determine how to best address this parental concern as it has been consistent over the three years of data collection.

The District has seen growth in providing a safe school, increasing from 88%, 89%, to 93% in the most recent climate survey.

Over the past three years of data, parent responses have declined from 29% to 20%, and 16% respectively. It is unclear the reasoning for this, however, data that did not change may have an impact. For example, there is a common thread among the data of bullying, particularly on the bus. Parents may feel as though their voices are not being heard if these areas of concern have not been addressed or communicated to them. It appears that some parents, through the open responses, felt that expectations were inconsistent and that administrators were not responsive to their needs. While there is a policy for family engagement, it was unclear how the District interacts with parents on a school level and encourages them to be part of the school community.

### *Considerations*

- Create focus teams of parents for each school that will come together as a district in a manner similar to the student voice program.
- Increase offerings on the district website to engage parents through relationships. Currently, the parent section is primarily for complaints.
- Determine the schools that had areas of concern related to communication between parents and staff, determine possible causes and how to address them through procedures and policies (handbook, common language across schools, clear expectations).
- Review the training bus personnel receive and how to incorporate them into professional development opportunities at the school and district level.
- Look for ways to increase participation on the survey.

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**Staff Survey**

In the last survey (2016), WCSD received its highest response rate of 67%. This is a good indicator that the District has actively sought staff to complete the survey. Over the past three years of the survey, 50% of the staff is in their first 5 years of employment.

There was a small dip in the expectations of success portion of the 2016 survey. It is unclear what this may be attributed to but it appears that the high school teachers had a lower expectation of success than the other grade levels. Although three years of results determined that staff overall feel there is a culture of respect and fairness, it should be noted that in one particular area of the survey, there is strong evidence that the expectations of student behaviors is not consistent. (Question 2e) where across all grade levels it was indicated as the least agreed upon element.

The staff survey indicated that parental involvement could be improved in the District. This is more evident in the middle and high school than the elementary school. Parents play a significant role in a child's education and the District is encouraged to dig deeper into this section. The drop from elementary to the upper grades was significant including staff meeting parents (16% high school, 33% middle school, 2015). A consistent rating of communication with parents was reported in the past three years of data. Staff felt as though the school was welcoming to parents and gave them ways to enhance their child's learning at home.

Generally, the staff believes that there is collaboration and a focus on differentiated instruction. At the high school level, the rate decreases consistently over the past three years where communication among staff related to student learning is not consistent. 33% of staff in 2015 reported that communication is not consistent which may create a barrier to learning across content areas. Less than three quarters of the staff in 2016 felt that early release days were helpful. It would be helpful to review the professional development plan, strategic plan, school and District goals, and these survey results to determine how to increase this percentage through productive and effective adult learning that is relevant to their individual roles.

In 2016, there was an 8% drop in staff believing that the social and emotional learning is a District priority. It would be helpful to investigate this dip further to determine causes for this change and determine next steps in the development of an action plan to address the change.

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Staff feels safe in the school where they work. Consistently, the rating has been above 90%. This is a good indication that the buildings are secure and there are protocols that are working in place. It should be noted that in some areas of this section, staff did not feel safe leaving the building after hours and going to their vehicles. This could be the location where the school is. Time should be taken to determine how to work with the community leaders to change the staff perception of safety when leaving after hours. It may be as simple as additional lighting or developing a buddy system. Some staff felt as though the job of safety falls on the administrators which are not helpful in a crisis situation. Protocols should be reviewed and often drilled so staff feels comfortable.

Enlisting teacher leaders in the building from all disciplines may assist in the creation of staff buy-in of their role in the safety of the school community.

### *Conclusion*

Reviewing the WCSD School Climate Survey District Report for the past three years did not show any high need areas. Rather, it demonstrated that staff, parents, and students like being part of the larger school community and that there are strong relationships that have been developed. There are some areas of growth that would help strengthen the survey results but more importantly the school community.

### *Overall suggestions*

- Expand on the student voice program. Create it in such a way that it becomes systemic and student driven at the school level.
- Provide professional development to bus personnel and make them part of your school community. Develop relationships with them and include them in your professional development plan.
- Create clear expectations in the handbook that move with the student on the bus. Ensure staff that the handbook and/or expectations of behavior are followed by providing authentic learning opportunities to engage areas of concern.
- Develop a parent voice program, similar to the student voice. Create multiple opportunities for parents to express their concerns, recommendations, and other areas of communication.
- Review the professional development plan for Wednesday early releases. Enlist staff to be on a professional development advisory team (PDAT) that leads the adult learning.

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- Select 3-4 key points you want the staff to be able to do/learn at the end of each year so there is focus on what is important based on the survey results. This may include grade level/school level specific learning.
- Provide staff with safety protocols on a regular basis.

**Executive Summary**

## **CONCLUSION**

The School Safety Advocacy Council strongly feels that as a result of the findings of this report, the leadership of the Washoe County School District cares deeply about the safety of district students and staff. We are confident that that District leadership and the Safe and Healthy Schools Commission will continue to focus time, funding, and resources in improving school safety. Along with this focus, District leaders need to implement less tangible items such as standardization and professional development. It is not sufficient to simply develop policies or provide trainings. It is critical to follow-through to confirm that policies are enforced, that trainings were understood and that information was applied.

The District administration and police department should work together to create and enforce the standardization of policies, procedures, equipment and training. Next, students and staff need to be supported to create positive school cultures. Finally, individual schools and the District need to continue to nurture their relationships with students' families, municipal agencies, and community based organizations.

The culture of school safety is set each day by the adults on campus. In other words, students will rise to the high expectations of adults or misbehave when low expectations are established. The challenge is that in the absence of shared high expectations by all adults, low expectations are allowed to spread. All administrators, teachers, and site staff must be empowered to take responsibility for the safety of their campus and must be shown how they are an integral part of making their schools safe.