

Coventry Officials Present School Safety and Security Plans

An informational forum was held at Coventry High School on Wednesday.

By [Lauren Costa](#) | February 1, 2013



Since the [tragic shooting](#) at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, schools across the country have been taking steps to improve safety measures, and Coventry Public Schools are no different.

On Wednesday evening, dozens of Coventry parents gathered in the high school auditorium for a [School Safety & Security Forum](#) to learn about the district's ongoing security evaluations and updated safety plans.

A District School Safety and Security Committee was recently formed to oversee the safety and security of students, employees, families and community members while on school grounds. The 28-member committee consists of town officials, school committee members, police and fire personnel, principals and district administration directors. Members make up three subcommittees that assess and oversee school Structures and Systems; Fire Drill, Lockdown and Evacuation Procedures and Training for all members of the school community.

Those in attendance on Wednesday viewed a presentation by Superintendent Dr. Michael Almeida (*attached*) that outlined the Action Plans for each subcommittee. Future collaborative efforts and those already underway will eventually result in a district-wide plan allowing all students, staff members,



emergency personnel and parents to understand and follow a uniform code of precautions and procedures in all Coventry schools.

Dr. Almeida explained that the district is currently implementing the use of employee ID and color-coded visitor badges, uniforms for custodial and maintenance staff, installation of additional panic buttons, updated intercom, surveillance and buzzer systems, and interior door locks on all doors. Plans for a new front office at [Western Coventry Elementary School](#) are in the works to increase security, as well as the construction of secured vestibules at the front office of all schools, similar to one already in place at [Coventry High School](#).

According to Dr. Almeida, emergency drill, lockdown and evacuation procedures have always taken place in Coventry schools, but have become more frequent over the past month. Universal training of school employees and students along with police and fire personnel has already begun and will allow for early police notification and immediate lockdown procedures which will be identical at all district schools.

"We are trying to come up with a one-page list of instructions so school employees know exactly what to do during a fire drill, lockdown or evacuation," said Asst. Superintendent Michael Convery.

In regards to the partnership between the school district and the [Coventry Police Department](#), Police Chief Bryan Volpe insisted that it's nothing new and is only becoming more efficient as new procedures are put into place.

"The partnership between the police and school departments has already been in place for a long time and it has been a very fruitful marriage and positive experience for us," he said. "The emergency systems that the schools had in place were already very strong and what I've seen in a few short weeks is a full speed ahead attack at all of the schools to make sure that these changes are taking place."

Following Dr. Almeida's presentation, a panel discussion was held, allowing parents to ask Committee members questions about plans, procedures and communication between home and school. At its conclusion, the collective mood at the forum was one of enthusiasm for the proactive steps that the Coventry School District is taking to ensure the safety of its students and community as a whole.

"This process has been very collaborative and in a quick, expedited approach, the people you see here came together and put actions into place to make sure our schools are safe," said Dr. Almeida. "We want to ensure that every student is safe every day. That is our number one priority."

The district's goal is to have many of the updates completed by the end of February, with the school vacation week of Feb. 18-22 being an optimal time for much of the work to be done. The estimated total cost of the updates is about \$200,000.

Coventry School Safety and Security Committee meetings are open to the public and will be advertised as they are scheduled.