



Monroe Public Schools – News Release

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For immediate release

MONROE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENHANCES SECURITY WITH \$168K GRANT

Student safety has always been the top priority in Monroe Public Schools, and now the district's schools are safer than ever, following the installation of new security and technology equipment made possible through a competitive state grant from the Michigan State Police.

Monroe Public Schools was awarded \$168,583 through the Competitive School Safety Grant Program to enhance access control and increase door security with new equipment and technology upgrades. The sizable grant enabled MPS to purchase new audio-video intercom systems and to nearly double the number of doors in the district that utilize electronic locks.

"As a district, we have been proactive utilizing technology to secure entrance to our schools and buildings," Superintendent Dr. Julie Everly asserted. "We had already implemented single access buzzer systems and cameras. The grant allowed us to accelerate our security plans."

Through the bid process, MPS selected Red Letter Productions as the source for the new equipment and installation, which was completed in August. The district's previous equipment used black-and-white monitors. The new system features larger, color displays that can provide a greater field of view when used with additional cameras.

The grant funded electronic locks for 70 doors at the schools, and the district paid for 10, bringing the total number of electronic-access doors in Monroe Public Schools to 156. The increased control over building access provided the option for MPS to move away from building keys, David Payne, Executive Director of Technology said.

Staff now use badges instead of signing out keys. The Technology Department can disable the badges during the summer, and a card can be deactivated if it is lost. The doors to the industrial wing of Monroe High School can remain locked throughout the day now. I-wing students are issued cards which enable them to enter the career center.

"All doors can now be secured during school hours," Payne emphasized. "There is no need for any doors to be propped open at recess or any other time, because teachers and staff can access them with the badges. Students feel safer, and staff feel safer, before and after school."

The new enhancements are just part of the school district's security measures. In addition to keeping exterior doors locked and utilizing a centralized building entrance location with camera-feed system, MPS safety protocols include background checks for all visitors, video surveillance, and training in safety initiatives such as ALICE – Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate. The School Messenger alert system is used to send emergency communications to parents via phone and text.

Two Police Liaisons are stationed in the district on weekdays – Officer Brian Winsjansen, a member of the City of Monroe Police Department, and Deputy Joe Hammond, a member of the Monroe County Sheriff Department. MPS has strong relationships with both departments. In the event of a crisis, the new technology at Monroe Public Schools enables the district to grant law enforcement remote access to their system.

“The safety of our students and staff is at the heart of everything we do at Monroe Public Schools,” Dr. Everly stressed. “In order for students to learn,” she said, “they have to feel safe.”

In the spring of 2018, the superintendent sought input from students, staff, parents, and community members, utilizing a Monroe Minute Survey focused on school safety. Roundtables provided additional opportunities for feedback.

“The conversations we engaged in with parents and stakeholders affirmed their support for protocols to ensure student safety,” Dr. Everly said.

Social-emotional issues are also part of many national school safety discussions. MPS students benefit from the district’s commitment to have a social worker and a positive climate liaison in every building, who offer support, engage students, and help them to develop connections. District officials also urge parents to encourage students to continue having conversations at home, and to have dialogues at school about any safety concerns that arise.

“It is critical for staff and parents to communicate to students that if they hear of a potential threat to safety or security that they should report it,” Dr. Everly stressed. “Let us know, so we can investigate it and take the appropriate measures to keep our students and staff safe.”

The Board and Administration pride themselves on being proactive to implement steps to protect the school community. “We are taking steps to ensure that all MPS staff are trained in school safety practices and initiatives,” Board President Robert Nichols said, “and we will continue to monitor new emerging technologies to strengthen security preparedness and protocols.”

“School safety is a topic we think about every single day,” Dr. Julie Everly concluded. “We are committed to making every effort to ensure our students a learning environment in which they feel safe.”

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