

SAFETY PERSONNEL INFORMATION

We believe that a safe, joyful, and nurturing environment promotes learning and growth.

Winston Churchill stated,

“Let our advance worrying become our advance thinking and planning.”

As has been previously communicated to the community, the Dryden Central School District has always and will continue to critically look at our systems, procedures, protocols, and Board of Education policies related to safety. In addition, one of the two District priorities this school year is to increase focus on the well-being of students and staff to create a positive school culture. We are almost a quarter of the way into the 21st century and the new millennium. Each year the complexities and demand of and on public education grow exponentially in all areas, including safety.

The District employs many passive and active systems to protect students and staff. For example, items such as swipe access, communication systems such as SchoolMessenger, drills, and cameras.

In addition, the District has developed a robust Multi-Tier System of Support and Services from a network of School Social Workers to Behavior Interventionists to school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support Plans to 6-12 Homebase programming to the implementation of a Social and Emotional Learning Program at the PK-5 level that focuses on many factors including social skills and regulating emotions.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

- **72%** of high schools in the United States have a Safety Personnel Officer (SPO) and/or local law enforcement assigned to a school.
- **Most if not all** school districts in Broome, Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties as well as two of the six districts in Tompkins County are getting ready to and/or already implement SPO programming.
- In the early 2000s, the District had an SPO through a program that at the time was funded through the NYS Troopers. It is our understanding that the program ended when funding was cut. The feedback from people who remember this program has been mixed in regard to their experiences.
- The District Safety Committee’s membership is comprised of the Superintendent, all five Supervisors (IT, Transportation, Food Service, Business Manager, and Facilities/Security) as well as representatives from the Dryden Village Police, Neptune Hose Company, McLean Fire Department, Freeville Fire Department, NYS Troopers, Tompkins County Sheriff’s Department, Board of Education representatives, administrators, staff members from all three bargaining units (DFA, DAA, and DESPA) as well as community and parent stakeholders.
- NYS allows school districts three distinct avenues when looking at the addition of safety personnel or law enforcement performing their duties in the capacity as SPO.

School Districts can:

- ✕ Contract with a local law enforcement agency
- ✕ Hire their own staff members and be accredited/licensed by the NYS Department of Criminal and Justice Services, the NYS Department, and the NYS Education Department
- ✕ Contract with a private security company

OUTCOME:

- After multiple conversations with our Board of Education, unanimous consensus from our District Safety Committee, our Leadership Team as well as research conducted by the Superintendent and the Director of Facilities and Security, including site visits to schools with this type of programming, the Board of Education approved the creation of **two District Safety Personnel positions** at their 30-OCT-2023 meeting as reflected on the Personnel Report.
- This means we will be **hiring individuals for this role who reflect our values.**
- The District will be applying to be accredited by the three agencies listed above. **This process is the most rigorous** of the three aforementioned avenues and will extend the timeline accordingly.
- The District felt that based on the feedback we received and the best way to address the concerns brought forward was for the **District to choose the option where we maintained the most control of our program and personnel. Success for School Safety Personnel** has largely been centered around the individual's ability to **form positive relationships.**

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF DISTRICT SAFETY PERSONNEL?

- Event supervision at large events such as prom and athletic contests
- Swipe card access currently performed by Facilities and IT
- Traffic direction at arrival and dismissal
- Alarm systems including lockdown, theft, raptor and fire systems
- External and internal cameras including placement
- Coordinate building safety plans
- Fire and safety drill facilitation
- District Liaison between the District, local law enforcement and other first responders
- Conduct regular external door checks
- Be familiar with and support enforcement of "stay away orders"

Duties specific to the position:

- ✘ Stay current regarding issues that impact children such as trafficking and local trends related to recreational drug use and its impact on our students.
- ✘ Develop positive relationships with all stakeholders, including staff, students, and families.
- ✘ Trained in current best practices related to safety, verbal de-escalation techniques, and participate in training related to restorative practices.

What will this position *not* do:

- ✘ These positions do not have the ability to arrest or detain students or family members.
- ✘ These positions do not have the ability to assign consequences to violations of the Code of Conduct. This work remains with school administrators.
- ✘ These positions will not be allowed to engage in behavior that is contrary to the District's mission, vision or core beliefs. These positions are subject to the same level of standards that the District has for its 400 staff members. They will be required to undergo a background check as well as fingerprint clearance.

OUR COMMITMENT:

We believe that a safe, joyful, and nurturing environment promotes learning and growth. School safety is a top priority for the Dryden Central School District and with this priority includes the evolving needs of our community. As of Spring 2024, two Safety Personnel Officers will be hired. During this time, they will begin familiarization of school buildings, responsibilities, meet with staff, and bring intentional coordination between personnel and administration. The District will continue to be mindful throughout this process of others perspectives as well as continue to strengthen our systems, protocols, procedures, and policies.

Lions, take care of yourself. Take care of each other. Always...**#LionPride!**

