



# **SAFETY AND SECURITY TASK FORCE REPORT JUNE 2024**

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September of 2023, Superintendent VanderYacht put out a request for community members to serve on a newly formed Safety & Security Task Force for the 2023/2024 school year. Under the leadership of Superintendent VanderYacht, the group was co-facilitated by Lynden parent and former law enforcement officer Clark Bourgault and Lynden parent and Lynden police officer Tanner Holland.

The idea of a Safety & Security Task Force was a result of the work done in 2023 by the Bond Planning Task Force and Facilities Planning groups. These two groups worked to create a list of recommendations to the district with regards to facility needs. While safety and security were key priorities for both facilities groups, their focus was on the short- and long-term school facility needs to meet the growing student population of Lynden. It was acknowledged during that time that Lynden Schools may benefit from a similar process related to staff, student, and community safety and security.

In October of 2023, the Safety & Security Task Force (SSTF) held its initial session and began a series of sessions involving several key topics. The purpose of sessions were to better understand current programs and protocols while developing a list of prioritized recommendations related to school safety and security. Over the course of six regularly scheduled meetings, the group reviewed current district practices and potential improvements in five general areas:

- Environmental/Facility design
- Safety & Security Protocols & Training
- Behavioral & Mental Health
- Security Cameras and Surveillance
- School Resource Officers

Following an introduction of the meeting's topic by district staff, a process of analysis and discussion took place in small table groups to ensure a collaborative working environment. Each session concluded with a 'share out' by each small group to the larger group. Pros and Cons of current practices were captured along with potential recommendations and opportunities for improvement in key safety and security areas.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Lynden School District is located in Lynden, Washington in Whatcom County. Lynden is currently growing at a rate of 1.41% annually with a population increase of 4.3% since 2020. Lynden is in Northwest Washington, 5 miles south of the U.S./Canadian border, 15 miles north of Bellingham, and 100 miles north of Seattle.

The school district mission states that “All students graduate college, career, and citizenship ready” through a vision defined by “high quality instruction and learning for Every Student, Every Day.” To support this mission, the district has three strategic priorities and areas of focus. The group’s work was focused on the first of three strategic priorities listed here:

#### Safe & Supportive Learning Environments

- *Culture of Belonging- All students feel welcome and are treated with dignity. We will strive to shape a culturally responsive and inclusive environment, intentionally designed to foster a sense of belonging.*
- *Multi-Tiered Systems of Support- All students known by name, strengths, background, and needs. Academic, behavioral, and social-emotional support systems in place to ensure student growth.*
- *School Safety and Emergency Response Plans- School safety plans and risk mitigation are reviewed regularly and updated to align with best practices and safety standards for schools. Plans and responses drilled regularly.*

The Lynden School District operates one high school, one middle school, three elementary schools, and a K-12 parent partnership alternative learning program. Current enrollment is approximately 3,500 students.

## 2.1 PARTICIPANTS

Response to the request to serve on the task force was high and attracted the interest and willingness of individuals with diverse experiences, particularly those with backgrounds in law enforcement and community safety.

Attendance was mixed with a smaller core group of 12-14 attending all or most sessions with other participants attending single or limited number of sessions.

Clark Bourgault	Tanner Holland	Adam Brown
Anthony Medawar	Brandon Mulder	Boyd McEwen
Christopher Koshman	Cody Bachman	Daniel Mrak
Dante Alexander	Debbie Hull	Donald Stockton
Eric Kingery	Patrick Williams	Greg Gerhardt
Heather Hentz	Nicholas Sawka	Jana Clow
Jesse Miller	Tyler DeZeeuw	Kris Jorgensen
Krista Gottschalk	Laura McMasters	Mark Ingalls
Thomas Boaz	Michael Andrew Ginez	Michelle Martinson
Nicholas Emory	Robert Kohlman	Russell Brown
Ryan Drake	Ryan Driscoll	Matt Charroin
Sharon Torres		

#### Guest Presenters:

Tim Metz, Lynden S.D. Director of Student Services  
Jordan Feigel, Lynden S.D. Mental Health Coordinator  
Ben Thomas, Lynden S.D. Director of Finance & Operations  
Nick Orzechowski, ZeroEyes

## 2.2 GOALS OF THE SAFETY & SECURITY TASK FORCE

The Safety & Security Task Force (SSTF) was established as a superintendent advisory committee. The district advertised and openly sought volunteers who would represent the broader community for the purpose of identifying priorities for safety and security implementation for the Lynden School District. The SSTF was established per the recommendations of the Facilities Planning Committee and Bond Planning Task Force Committee in recognition of the need for further investigation to develop a prioritized list of safety and security projects' needs. Through the analysis of current district practices, industry recommended best practices, neighboring districts' practices, and available industry resources, this committee prioritized projects for consideration by the Lynden School District that maximize impact with the use of funds to support safe and supportive learning environments.

## 3.0 PROCESS

On October 11, 2023, the SSTF met for the first of six meetings to better understand current district practices and protocols related to safety and security. Each meeting was facilitated by Superintendent VanderYacht with support from co-leads, Clark Bourgault and Tanner Holland. Reports and information were also presented by district personnel. Discussion in small groups and feedback provided at the end of each meeting informed the recommendations included in this document.

## 4.0 MEETING DATES AND AGENDAS

Agendas for a series of seven facilitated meetings were developed to provide a full understanding of current district practices and protocols, neighboring districts' processes, industry best practices, and available tools to enhance and make current practices more efficient and effective. Each meeting allowed by collaboration meant to create opportunities for each member to engage in the data in a meaningful way.

<b>Mtg. #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
01	October 11, 2023	Environmental Facility Design
02	November 8, 2023	Safety & Security Protocols & Training
03	January 3, 2024	Review of 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> meetings
04	February 7, 2024	Behavioral & Mental Health
05	March 13, 2024	Security Cameras & Surveillance
06	April 10, 2024	School Resource Officers
07	May 22, 2024	Prioritization of Recommendations

## 5.0 FINDINGS

Lynden School District and the members of the Safety & Security Task Force see no higher priority than the safety and security of its students. Lynden recognizes that learning suffers when students fear for their safety. A safe school environment is critical for healthy academic and social development. Today's students are much more aware of safety concerns than ever before, particularly at the high school level.

### 5.1 STRONG CURRENT PRACTICES

Lynden School District has a comprehensive safety program in place that was not fully understood by participants prior to completion of the sessions. Although it was generally concluded that systems are in place, there was equal agreement among community members and district staff that continuous improvement should always be a priority. Here are some of the identified strengths:

- The importance Lynden School District places on ensuring the safety and security of its students, staff, and visitors is aligned to the expectations held by the community. There are functioning school-level and district-level safety team structures in place to implement preventative measures and to complete regular drills and strengthen responses. The district utilizes the federal incident command system when responding to emergencies.
- Lynden School District currently utilizes the 'I Love You Guys' Standard Response Protocol (SRP) across all its schools and facilities. This program is well-developed and endorsed by school districts and law enforcement across the nation. I Love U Guys provides consistency in emergency response, training, communication, and signage and has full support of the SSTF.
- Standard Response Protocol (SRP) collaboration with other county school districts has been established with the first multi-school district, multi-agency exercise scheduled for June 27, 2024. This collaboration and commitment to agreed-upon

protocols contribute to opportunities for mutual aid among school districts and a more unified and consistent response from law enforcement.

- The Lynden School District completed a Threat, Vulnerability and Security Review through the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management prior to the 2016-17 school year. Recommendations have been implemented over subsequent years. Key improvements include entry and access control, employee & visitor badging, surveillance cameras, panic buttons, and incident/training documentation protocols.
- All school and district facilities have security camera coverage. Live and recorded video is housed on a cloud-based server and accessible remotely in real time to designated school employees.
- Newly constructed school district facilities utilized input from safety professionals who understand Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). Lynden Middle School and Fisher Elementary were designed and constructed with safety and security as a top priority.
- The Lynden School District recognizes the importance of prevention from internal threats. A mental health coordinator is employed full time by the district and serves as lead for level one threat assessments, concern & crisis response, and facilitator of outside therapy referrals. There is a tremendous focus on supportive measures throughout the district such services provided by dean of students, school counselors and nurses, teachers, coaches, support staff, the Be The One mentor program, and promotion of student clubs & activities.
- All email, one drive, and internet activity run through district student accounts is monitored for appropriateness and safety. Alerts of serious threats or potential self-harm are provided to school personnel 24/7. There is also an established anonymous tip line established and used. The district also continues to pursue partnership with local agencies to educate students and families of the risks associated with online activity.
- Lynden High School currently employs a Campus Security Officer who supervises students, monitors the security camera systems, secures the campus perimeter, and supports student discipline when needed.

## 5.2 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create and foster a safety-focused culture. Best way to do this is to prioritize training consistency. Build confidence and shape the mindsets of staff, students, and community. Frequent and simple.
- Establish video phone and access control entry protocols. Include office staff and school personnel training (i.e. challenge questions, 'look fors'). Utilize double vestibule process when possible.
- Further develop relationships with law enforcement. Commit to regular multi-agency training exercises. Give WhatComm (dispatch) access to surveillance camera system. Develop a camera labeling system to improve ability of first responders to locate threats using camera views. Effective communication will be key to a timely response and for limiting chaos. Review access to facilities for first responders who may be responding from multiple agencies.
- Replace Lynden High School with a modern facility, limited points of entry, and installation of all current school safety 'best practices'. Include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) expertise on all new school designs as well as upgrades to current facilities. Use resources from successful capital bond to make safety upgrades across all district facilities (including LMS & Fisher)
- Work in collaboration with City of Lynden to develop a District Resource Officer position and potential interlocal agreement to begin in the 2025-2026 school year. Place value on the qualifications of the employee selected for establishing trusting relationships with students and staff across the PK-12 system.
- Complete a safety audit of pedestrian, bicycle, and traffic risks around each of the district's schools. Identify priorities upgrade safety measures such as signage, lighting, and marked crosswalks/paths. Work in collaboration with City of Lynden to complete prioritized projects in a timely manner.
- Increase camera coverage to provide 100% coverage of external areas of all facilities where students are served. Pursue weapons detection (ZeroEyes) and other emerging technologies. This may require updated/increased camera coverage inside some older facilities.
- Regularly complete a comprehensive Threat, Vulnerability and Security Review conducted by an outside agency every 4 years. Last review was completed by Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management in 16-17 prior to opening of LMS & Fisher.
- Review current online safety and awareness educational program for students/parents. Develop and make available a comprehensive safety program.



## **6.0 CLOSING**

The Safety and Security Task Force is one facet of a broader, continuous system of district and citizen engagement to improve the safety and security of our community. This comprehensive approach informs both current and future recommendations on when, and to what extent, funds should be used to implement essential safety and security processes and protocols to provide for a safe and supportive learning environment for our students. The report is a documentation of thoughtful, collaborative work performed by community members committed to our students, families, staff, and visitors to our facilities. Members of the Safety & Security Task Force should be recognized and appreciated for their service. Consideration should be made to reconvene a sub-group of this task force for future safety-related initiatives or comprehensive safety & security reviews.