



# Memorandum

vancouver school board



ITEM 5

June 10, 2013

To: Management Coordinating Committee (Committee I)

From: Scott Robinson, Associate Superintendent

Re: **School Security Review**

## INTRODUCTION:

This report is for the information of trustees and committee members. No action on the part of the Board is required.

## BACKGROUND:

At the February 4, 2013 meeting of the Board, it was recommended that;

In order to continue to provide a safe environment for students, the VBE request a staff report to Committee I this spring regarding the security audit that is underway in the district, including an examination of current infrastructure and practice regarding the locking of exterior and interior doors at each school site and the ability of school staff to communicate directly with emergency services.

## REVIEW OF PROCESS:

Staff have conducted a review of security of all elementary and secondary\* school sites over the past several months intended to address the points contained in the above recommendation. This review was conducted by the Field Services department, under the guidance of a working group comprised of representatives from the Vancouver Police Department, VASSA, VEPVPA, Human Resources, Facilities and Field Services departments.

*\*Alternate and Adult Education Centre sites will be reviewed in the fall of 2013*

The review focused on the following:

1. An examination of current infrastructure and practice regarding the locking of exterior and interior doors at each school site.
2. A discussion about the implications of locking particular exterior doors on the day-to-day operation of each school and the associated safety implications.
3. An examination of current infrastructure and practice regarding the ability of school staff to communicate directly with emergency services.

This review was conducted by the following means:

1. Creation of school-based working groups comprised of representatives from school Health and Safety Committees
2. An electronic survey regarding school access and communications
3. The submission of marked school maps indicating the current practice regarding the locking of each exterior door in the school.

PRELIMINARY REVIEW FINDINGS:		
	Elementary Schools	Secondary Schools
<b>Exterior Doors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the great majority of schools, the majority of doors are already kept locked during the school day.</li> <li>• Many schools have identified additional exterior doors that could be locked without causing significant disruption to the operations of the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice varies widely from site to site. Some sites identified a significant number of doors at their site currently kept locked during the school day, while others have a greater percentage of unlocked doors.</li> <li>• Many schools have identified additional exterior doors that could be locked without causing significant disruption to the operations of the school.</li> </ul>
<b>Interior Doors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of doors can be tumbled in the locked position from the outside and opened internally by room occupants when in the locked position.</li> <li>• Majority of classroom teachers currently keep their door locked and shut or at least in the locked position during class time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of doors can be tumbled in the locked position from the outside and opened internally by room occupants when in the locked position.</li> <li>• Approximately 75% of classroom teachers currently keep their door locked and shut or at least in the locked position during class time</li> </ul>
<b>Communication with Emergency Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of elementary classrooms do not currently have a technical means of communicating directly with emergency services.</li> <li>• A variety of electronic and non-electronic means are in place for communication between classrooms and the general office should an emergency occur.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 50% of secondary classrooms currently have direct access to emergency services</li> <li>• Great majority of classrooms have a telephone that allows for direct communications between classrooms and the main office</li> </ul>

## PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS:

### Interior Doors

- Encourage change in practice – classrooms doors in locked position, and either closed over or shut completely.

### Exterior Doors

- Review school-based recommendations for locking additional doors with the VPD and communicate final decisions on each door to schools.
- It should be noted that law enforcement personnel have indicated clearly that locking all exterior doors in a school does not reflect current law enforcement wisdom with respect to school security. In the event of an emergency, law enforcement personnel need easy access to a school and it is problematic for those personnel to be limited to a single entrance. In addition, it has been pointed out that children on the playground need easy access to their school in the event that an outside threat exists. To lock all doors except the front entrance could potentially limit their ability to escape an outside threat.

### Communication with Emergency Services:

- Review procedures for communication with emergency services at all schools in September
- Ensure that all classrooms that do not have direct access to emergency services have a clear plan in place for communication in the event of an emergency
- Investigate the possibility of earlier implementation of VOIP – (Voice Over Internet Protocol) communication system. This system will provide communications access through computers rather than a separate phone system.

## CONCLUSION:

As indicated in the previous report on this subject, it is important that the District take reasonable steps to ensure that an appropriate level of security exists at all school sites. The safety of our students and employees is of paramount importance to the District and this report and future action associated with it are intended to reflect that.

In order to analyze our current practice and infrastructure, it was important to identify the nature of the perceived or actual security threats that might present themselves within a school at some point in the context of urban Canadian schools. Although it is understandable that given the recent school shooting events in the United States, there would be a tendency to focus on this type of threat when planning, it should be recognized that statistically speaking, it is extremely unlikely that an event of this nature would occur in a Canadian school.

Although this possibility is not nil, law enforcement personnel indicate that there are other much more realistic types of threats that should be considered when planning implementation of school security measures in addition to the threat of an armed shooter, and as such, our preparation and planning should reflect this reality.

As stated in an earlier report, of equal importance to providing a safe environment is taking steps to instill a sense of confidence within our parent and student community regarding school safety. It would be an unfortunate and unnecessary result of this review if our community were to perceive its cause as an inherent or undue concern on the part of the District about safety within our schools. Communication and the public relations aspect of this review and its recommendations will need to be considered and proceeded with carefully. Accordingly, a communication plan to parents regarding school safety will be developed and implemented in the fall of 2013.