

BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

SAFETY & SECURITY PROGRAM ASSESSMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

JUNE 2015

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ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report is presented in chapter format with four major sections. Section I is the Statement of Need, Section II, the Executive Summary, Section III Essential Challenges, Section IV Recommendations Matrix and Section V Firm Qualifications..

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Margolis Healy acknowledges the assistance and guidance of Paul Irish, who served as our primary project liaison. We extend our appreciation to all members of the Burlington High School faculty and staff who were essential in providing the appropriate context and historical information about the School, its security operations, and the evolution of emergency and crisis planning efforts.

Everyone, without exception, was welcoming, forthcoming, and honest in his or her opinions and thoughts. Burlington High School was truly a gracious host.

DISCLAIMER AND DISCLOSURE

Margolis Healy conducted this assessment and prepared this report at the request of Burlington High School. The authors' opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are provided solely for the use and benefit of the client. Any warranties (expressed and/or implied) are specifically disclaimed. Any statements, allegations, and recommendations in this report should not be construed as a governing policy or decision unless so designated by other documentation. This report is based on the most accurate data gathered and available to Margolis Healy at the time of the assessment and presentation. Our recommendations are subject to change in light of changes in such data.

SECTION I – STATEMENT OF NEED

Burlington High School is located in Burlington, Vermont. With a population of approximately 41,000, Burlington is the largest and most diverse city in the State of Vermont. It sits in a unique picturesque location on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain, between the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks.

Burlington High School offers a comprehensive and challenging college preparatory program with an emphasis on academic excellence and intellectual curiosity. The mission of the school encourages students to be curious, independent, motivated, and socially responsible. Students will demonstrate scholarship; model personal and social responsibility; respect, and an appreciation for the diverse cultures, values, and abilities of all members; helps them prepare for life-long learning and will make a positive contribution to the world beyond BHS.

Due to Burlington's designation as a refugee resettlement center, students from all over the world interact with native Vermont students who themselves come from a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds. The result is a high school population of 1,100 that is uniquely and interestingly diverse in an urban school in the midst of one of the country's smallest and most rural states. All Burlington High School students are required to complete 10 hours of community service each year as part of the charge "to educate and inspire students to influence and shape the future." Students also engage in a broad range of co-curricular activities including a recognized drama program, competitive sports teams, and literary, recreational, and arts clubs and programs.

Margolis Healy was retained to conduct an independent and objective assessment of the current safety & security practices at Burlington High School. This assessment is intended to acknowledge where the School has been successful and where opportunities may exist to enhance the campus security posture in light of our findings.

SECTION II – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We completed this assessment by conducting a multi-day site visit to Burlington High School in an effort to fully understand its physical design, functional use, and the operational challenges presented by the surrounding community. In addition, Margolis Healy conducted a series of interviews with students, faculty, and administrative staff and reviewed significant documentation relevant to our assessment such as emergency plans, written directives, and policies and procedures to better orient ourselves with the areas under review.

This report is intended to provide the Burlington High School leadership team with an orientation to the major themes that were developed and identified during the course of our engagement. This may include areas in which we believe the current physical security measures in place are performing well and of course, areas in which we believe there are opportunities to enhance the current security posture.

We identified four major themes or “essential challenges” that we feel are critical areas in which Burlington High School should focus its efforts to improve short and long-term security services. We believe that with some reasonable investments in existing personnel, training, and physical security enhancements, the Burlington High School can maintain its open and welcoming environment, while providing a safe and secure environment for all its students, faculty, staff, and visitors to work, learn, and grow.

We believe in identifying the essential challenges facing the School, the leadership now has the opportunity to strategically enhance the overall safety, security, and crisis response posture in a reasonable, cost-effective manner, while continuing to foster and provide world-class educational opportunities and maintain a welcoming environment to the community. All that we have witnessed and all that we have learned supports our belief that the leadership of BHS is committed to providing the safest environment possible for its many students, faculty, staff, visitors, and guests.

SECTION III – ESSENTIAL CHALLENGES

Emergency Response Planning

Burlington High School currently has an emergency plan that is made up of a series of emergency response protocols and procedures. However, the existing plan needs to be enhanced to an all hazards plan, which has become the contemporary standard for high schools across the country. Many staff members with whom we spoke were unfamiliar with the existing emergency response plan and it appears that these documents have not been advertised or promulgated in the appropriate fashion.

An important component of developing these plans is to form a collaborative school crisis planning team, which would involve school and community partners, including your local first response community. A modern emergency operations plan (EOP) for schools should contain at a minimum:

- A basic plan
- Functional annexes
- Threat or hazard specific annexes

The plan should provide an overview of the school's specific approach to safety and security and emergency management and is intended to be used by the school, local emergency first responders, and members of the community. Some mandatory aspects of the plan include:

- An introduction
- A promulgation statement
- A record of changes
- A plan distribution list
- Purpose, scope and assumptions
- A concept of operations
- Organization and assignment of responsibilities
- Direction, control, and coordination
- Information collection and analysis
- Training and exercises
- Administration, finances, and logistics
- Plan development and maintenance

Functional annexes detail the goals and specific actions to be taken by members of the school during an emergency such as evacuations, continuity of operations, and security. The minimum functional annexes that should be included in the plan include:

- Communications
- Evacuation
- Shelter in place
- Lockdown
- Lockout
- Accounting for all faculty, staff, and students
- Rcunification
- Continuity of operations
- Security
- Recovery
- Health and medical

Threat or hazard-specific annexes specify the goals and objectives and courses of actions to be taken by the school in order to deal with a particular hazard or threat such as an earthquake or active shooter. Similar to functional annexes, threat and hazard-specific annexes describe how the school manages the functions before, during, and after an emergency.

We were unclear throughout our interview process about where the ultimate responsibility for emergency preparedness and planning falls at Burlington High School. While some members of the campus community are actively engaged with the emergency planning process, we received no consistent answer in reference to who at the school has the primary function of emergency response planning.

In addition, it appears that there is an opportunity to enhance the level of participation on the school crisis planning team and that a renewed level of energy and commitment to the school's emergency response planning process would serve the school well as it moves into the future.

In nearly every interview we conducted, we asked faculty and staff members if they had received any training on what to do in an emergency or if they had received any training or education on the school's emergency operations plan. We were disappointed to hear from many people that they lacked a familiarity with what was expected of them during specific crisis situations and many felt uncomfortable with the level of emergency training and exercises that was conducted at the school.

We witnessed this first hand when the school fire alarm was activated during our on-site engagement and the school had to be evacuated as a result of this alarm. We observed many faculty members who appeared to be unfamiliar with their evacuation routes and assembly areas and many of the students were in areas that were far too close to the school for adequate safe standoff distances if a real emergency were to have taken place.

Many members of the school community told us in interviews after the evacuation of the school that they were unfamiliar with the school's relocation sites and evacuation routes to these sites. Many told us they would not know how to conduct the family reunification process if the entire school had to be evacuated during a real emergency.

While many emergency response protocols exist in current planning documents, it appears that there needs to be a significant increase in the level of training and exercises at all levels to ensure the school is prepared to effectively respond to any type of emergency.

Access Control and Visitor Management

Burlington High School does not specifically account for or deny access to anyone during the school day. While we understand the school's desire for a more collegiate atmosphere that is open and welcoming to its students and community members, we believe that this practice leaves the school and its occupants at risk and is not in keeping with access control and visitor management contemporary standards found in K-12 schools throughout the country.

We witnessed the open environment of the school during our visit and at times we were overwhelmed with the number of students and what appeared to be guests at the school walking the hallways during student drop off/pick up and throughout the school day.

We also observed the student ambassador program that by design is an informal program hosted by the student body to welcome visitors to the school. However, it is our professional opinion that this practice puts these students in a position of risk during a potentially violent encounter at the main entrance to the school.

We did not observe any deliberate "way finding" signage during our visit that directs visitors to the main office for official/unofficial business. In addition, we did not observe faculty or staff members who had been given the specific assignment of monitoring hallways or school entrances during school drop off/pick up or during normal class transition times.

Throughout our engagement at the school, we noted that the school lacks a consistent application of its faculty/staff visual identification system. While we made our way to the main office and received our visitor passes each day during our engagement, we observed many children and adults walking the hallways of the school who lacked appropriate identification and credentials. With the school's current open-access environment, this type of credentialing system can serve to immediately identify those who are in the school for official business and visitors who may have to be directed to the main office to receive their visitors pass.

Based on our observations, we believe there is an opportunity to expand the use of electronic access control, staff and student credentialing and security cameras in a manner that is non-intrusive and maintains the open environment that the school desires.

Faculty and Staff – Culture/Climate

Although a school culture and climate assessment was not in our original scope of work, it was clear to us after interviews with many of the school's faculty and staff that there is a high level of frustration and anxiety surrounding what many faculty and staff members feel is a lack of support from the school's administration and the local school board.

Many teachers spoke of having their hands tied when making individual classroom discipline decisions and many of those same teachers feel their jobs would be in jeopardy if they dealt with some of the behavioral issues that are having a negative impact in their classrooms. Throughout our conversations comments like, "things have reached a boiling point" and "we are just a short distance away from something bad happening in our school" continued to surface.

When faculty members perceive a lack of support from their school administrators, individual teachers may hesitate to enforce school policy or address inappropriate classroom behavior, which can create an unsafe environment within the school if not immediately addressed.

Security Systems and Technology

As part of our engagement, we familiarized ourselves with the campus environment, history of prior incidents, and past threats to the campus by speaking with local law enforcement, school administrators, and members of the faculty and staff, reviewing documentation, and walking the campus at various hours of the day.

While there are many components to a physical security program such as signage, lighting, and environmental design, the use of security systems and technology such as security cameras, electronic access control, and intrusion detection systems play a crucial role that continues to evolve as technology advances.

The effective use of security systems and technology should at least include the following elements to ensure successful governance, program management, and sustainability:

- Design standards
- Acceptable use policies
- Standardized equipment, installers/integrators
- Program management

Grammar schools, high schools, colleges, and universities across the country have increasingly embraced the use of electronic security systems to enhance campus safety. The decision to implement electronic security systems is one that requires significant research, planning, and coordination based on the particular circumstances of each school, including its culture, resources, precipitating events, and security management capacity.

BHS is currently utilizing security cameras and electronic access control on a limited basis. We believe that these systems, while functional are not fully integrated and do not create operational efficiencies. In addition, we believe the BHS leadership needs to evaluate the School's acceptable use policies, particularly around security cameras. While there is a district policy, BHS should develop its own policy that discusses and establishes its purpose, responsibilities, procedures, video retention periods, non-discrimination, expectation of privacy, and law enforcement access to video records.

We also believe BHS needs to further evaluate its use of electronic access control, who, in fact, is given a credential, and how they are approved. Our understanding is that this "practice" is inconsistent and there is no general governance over the operational benefits of the system. We also believe it is necessary to train additional staff in current practices of issuing and programming credentials to ensure reasonable redundancy. Margolis Healy will provide sample policies and practices outside of this report wherever possible.

BHS should also consider how these systems would communicate or "talk" to one another in the future and as upgrades are required. To truly benefit from force multiplication, BHS would be best served by consolidating to a centralized system that allows benefits such as alarm monitoring or "camera recall," sequential card and camera tracing, and remote lockdown capabilities from multiple workstations.

SECTION IV – RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX

RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX		2015						2016						2017					
		COST			CRITICALITY			COST			CRITICALITY			COST			CRITICALITY		
		Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High
EMERGENCY PLANS																			
1	Enhance the level of faculty and staff participation on the school crisis planning team.	X					X												
2	Establish routine crisis planning team meetings.	X					X												
3	Inform all school stakeholders of the progress of the work being conducted by the school crisis planning team.	X				X													
4	Write an all-hazards emergency operations plan that is in keeping with federal "Guide for Developing a High Quality Emergency Operations Plan".	X				X													
5	Ensure the plan is reviewed annually and revised as needed.	X					X												
6	Develop functional and threat specific annexes.	X				X													
7	Enhance the level of emergency preparedness drills designed to test the effectiveness of the schools emergency operations plan along with the individual response actions taken during these simulated emergencies.	X					X												
8	Require Incident Command System 100 and National Incident Management System 700 training for all members of the school crisis planning team and critical decision makers within the school.							X				X							
9	Continue to enhance the level of staff and student familiarity with the schools crisis response protocols.	X					X												
10	Establish and train reunification policies and practices							X				X							
11	Consider adding redundant capabilities to utilize public address systems outside of the main office								X			X							
SECURITY STAFFING																			
12	Continue to enhance the level of involvement of the School Resource Officer's (SRO) in emergency preparedness planning, training and exercising.	X					X												
13	Seek ways to enhance the SRO's interactions and education opportunities with the student body.	X					X												
14	Consider increasing the level of faculty and staff visibility during student drop off, pick up and class transition times	X					X												

RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX		2015			2016			2017											
		COST Low Med High			CRITICALITY Low Med High			COST Low Med High			CRITICALITY Low Med High								
15	Continue to enhance the level crisis response planning, training and exercising with the Burlington Police Department?							X						X					
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT & FACILITIES																			
16	Conduct training to ensure appropriate faculty and staff are able to utilize all emergency communication equipment.								X						X				
17	Consider purchasing additional two way radios to be placed in each classroom.									X					X				
18	Provide radio etiquette and emergency communications training to all staff with portable radios.								X						X				
19	Continue to enhance the level faculty and staff familiarity of "safe areas" within each classroom.	X					X												
20	Have school crisis planning team members or facilities staff meet with all classroom teachers to confirm/test safe area locations.	X					X												
21	Identify "safe rooms" within the school that can be used by faculty, staff, students and visitors during an emergency.	X					X												
22	Test the awareness of "safe rooms" and "safe areas" and the practicality of these "rooms" during drills and make appropriate adjustments as needed.	X					X												
ACCESS CONTROL - VISITOR MANAGEMENT																			
23	Control all access to your building by requiring all faculty, staff, students and visitors to use the main entrance to your campus.	X					X												
24	Consider adding way finding signs at the main entrance that directs all visitors to the main office area.	X					X												
25	Develop a catchment area to restrict the flow of visitors and unauthorized persons into classroom areas.								X						X				
26	Reconsider the use of student ambassadors in their current role of welcoming visitors to the school.	X					X												
27	Ensure all faculty, staff and students are aware of the security risks associated with leaving exit doors during normal business hours.	X					X												
28	Consider assigning specific faculty and staff to routinely check all exterior doors to the school during normal business hours.	X					X												
29	Promulgate and consistently enforce existing visual identity policy	X					X												

RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX		2015						2016						2017					
		COST Low Med High			CRITICALITY Low Med High			COST Low Med High			CRITICALITY Low Med High			COST Low Med High			CRITICALITY Low Med High		
SECURITY SYSTEMS & TECHNOLOGY																			
30	Continue to integrate security technologies such as electronic access, door position switches and video to maximize force multiplication																		
31	Consider upgrading the existing Tyco access control system to newer version after evaluation of existing and future needs																		
32	Establish video retention standard and bring hardware capacity into compliance within 24 months.																		
33	Consider adding remote panic alarms for counseling staff and or other high risk positions.																		

or standalone door locking systems and hardware; campus lighting (interior and exterior); E911 capacity and PBX phone systems; mass notification systems (high and low technology); fire and life safety systems; visitor management policies and practices; inclusion of crime prevention through environmental design considerations; and access control and other security technology tools.

The Third Circle explores measures that enable the institution to respond to events and security and safety related needs in an organized, timely, and efficient manner. This may include a public safety function with organized involvement of students, faculty and staff in the security of the campus; memoranda of understanding with area police, fire and emergency medical services; emergency response and recovery systems, policies and procedures that have been trained to; and adoption and implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS). Combined, this third circle of prevention builds capacity for the human response to safety and security requirements.

Taken together, the various strategies depict the interconnected nature of campus safety and security. Changes or decisions made to one area impact the others. The deployment of security technology (cameras, door prop alarms, controlled access points) may or may not have an effect on the number of public safety officers, which may or may not impact other security needs. MHA works with our clients to develop a reasonable campus safety and security program based on their current state and the desired future state.

The measures taken to address safety and security are as much data and metrics driven as they are based on perception. We believe that our expertise, knowledge and experiences uniquely qualify us to assist our client institutions with recommendations tuned to their culture and needs.

Margolis Healy & Associates, LLC is a minority and veteran-owned small business. For a complete listing of available services, please visit www.margolishealy.com.



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