

# **ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOLS SAFETY TASK FORCE**

## **FINAL REPORT**

June 2023

### **TASK FORCE MEMBERS**

Commissioner Jean Hamilton,  
Co-Chair

Cassie Rice

Ari Schein

Kate O'Boyle

Richard Bradford

Evan Sredzienski

Tina Sykes

Andy Simmons

Commissioner Earl McKee,  
Co-Chair

Rani Dasi

Dr. Nyah Hamlett

Andre Richmond

Dr. Monique Felder

Paul Bell

Chris Atack

### **TASK FORCE ALTERNATES**

George Griffin

Tracy Holloway

Andre Stewart

Andrew Poole

Jonathan McVey

Patrick Abele  
(Withdrew May 1, 2023)

### **STAFF**

Greg Wilder, Orange County Manager's Office

### **FACILITATOR**

The Honorable James T. Bryan III

**Orange County Schools Safety Task Force**  
**Report to Orange County Board of Commissioners**  
**June 2023**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Board of Commissioners approved the formation and charge for the Schools Safety Task Force (SSTF or Task Force) at the Board's November 15, 2022 Business meeting. The SSTF Charge (subsequently amended on April 18, 2023) was to:

- 1) Discuss ways in which the Orange County government, schools, law enforcement, and community can enhance the safety of the school environment to protect from external threats and promote the education of Orange County K-12 public school students; and
- 2) Recommend to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) new or amended policies, ordinances, and/or practices that will address those external threats and provide a safer school environment for our students, teachers, and staff.

Task Force members and their stakeholder representations on the Task Force are listed on Attachment A. Retired Judge Jay Bryan served as facilitator for the Task Force. Greg Wilder with the Orange County Manager's Office provided staff support.

From February 2023 through June 2023, the Task Force met a total of six times to explore the primary topic areas of:

- Protest/demonstrations
- Active Assailants, and
- Public Access to School Property During School Hours.

The meetings were open to the public, and notice of the meetings, agendas, and attached documents was given in several different locations. SSTF members considered information that included, but was not limited to:

- vulnerability assessments,
- comprehensive safety plans,
- coordinated communication between the school districts and law enforcement,
- school risk management plans,
- best practices for School Resource Officers (SROs),
- modifications to school buildings regarding safety, and
- state statutes and local policies regarding protests and school safety.

The SSTF found that both Orange County Schools and Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools have up to date safety plans and regular communications with law enforcement. Both districts and law enforcement followed best practices as recommended by the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools. However, the work of SSTF did reveal areas where clarifications and education could enhance school safety for students, teachers, and staff. One key finding is that on-going communication and education between school staff, parents, student, law enforcement, and the public with understandable language is needed to prevent misunderstandings and to create common expectations. Therefore, an annual safety summit and an annual safety survey of students, staff, and parents is recommended. Another key finding is that the physical boundaries/right-of-ways of each school be shared with law enforcement and school leadership to better manage public access and apply applicable laws. A third key finding is that on-going education of all stakeholders is needed to better understand when and how to respond to school disruptions caused by protests and demonstrations. The full list of recommendations is at the end of this report.

## GROUNDWORK

After establishing ground rules for discussion at the first Task Force meeting, members discussed:

- the Task Force Charge,
- the applicability of any safety provisions within both the municipalities and in the unincorporated areas of the County,
- the applicability of provisions to all groups,
- safety concerns not only for students but also teachers and all school staffs, and
- potential topics and speakers.

At the second meeting on March 23, 2023, law enforcement and individual school safety administrators on the Task Force provided information and insight on three questions regarding Protest/Demonstration, Active Assailants, and Public Access to School Property during School Hours:

- 1) What is happening within the schools to address these safety areas?
- 2) What is one example of school safety challenges in the three areas?
- 3) How do law enforcement and the schools coordinate to protect schools and address these safety areas?

The importance of current collaboration efforts on a quarterly basis with law enforcement, fire department personnel and emergency management as well as annual training and utilization of SROs was emphasized as critical. Unknown demonstrations, public confusion over use of school facilities and accessing school buses, applicability of North Carolina General Statute (NCGS) 36A (Riots, Civil Disorders, and Emergencies), and permitting processes for protests/demonstrations were identified as challenges.

Law enforcement noted that other safety challenges included educating people on criminal behavior versus anti-social behavior and explaining the constitutional and statutory limitations placed on law enforcement. Communication and having a clear understanding of everyone's role are keys to coordinating safety. Other points of discussion covered concerns for safety planning for public access to school facilities and for school board and other meetings at schools, the value of the Center for Safer School as a resource, and the challenge of school threats.

At the April 13, 2023, SSTF meeting, Karen Fairley, Executor Director of the Center for Safer Schools, an agency within the NC Department of Public Instruction, presented. Among the Center's responsibilities established in NCGS 115C-105.56 and 105.57, Powers and Duties, are serving as a hub for technical assistance on

school safety to school faculty, staff, law enforcement, youth-serving community agencies, juvenile justice officials, policymakers, parents/guardians, and students. The Center promotes safe learning environments for N.C. K-12 with a focus on prevention and mitigation as well as response and recovery in school safety events. Ms. Fairley discussed Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and use of demarcation of school property, windows and lighting, natural surveillance and landscaping to promote safety. She also reviewed several programs for safety under statute that promote safety and planning, including annual updating of Vulnerability Assessments and Comprehensive Safety Plans, development of Anonymous Reporting Systems and four phases of emergency management (State Emergency Response Application (SERA) and School Risk Management Plans (SRMP) (NCGS 115C-105.47 through 57).

Ms. Fairley emphasized the importance and statutory requirement (NCGS 115C-105.49) of consistent annual drills, including reunification plans and communication with parents, and the need for physical security audits. Limited funding is available through the Center for SROs whom she defined as helping provide safe learning environments, resources for staff, positive relationships with youth, and strategies to resolve problems affecting youth and protecting all students. She advised that SROs should not be seen as an enforcement arm of the school system.

For its April 27, 2023, meeting, the Task Force invited speakers John Roberts, County Attorney for Orange County Board of Commissioners, and UNC Law School Professor, Mary-Rose Papandrea, who is considered an expert on the First Amendment and the Constitution and currently teaches a course specifically on education and constitutional law. Mr. Roberts provided an overview of laws impacting conduct at schools by students, parents and others. He briefly discussed prohibition of weapons on school property and effects of conceal carry laws, the legal provisions of NCGS 36A about creating a public disturbance that may disrupt a school, and the meaning of “disorderly conduct” as used in the statute. Part of his review and questions from members focused on protests and other activities that might occur on the public roadway adjoining a school property, including sidewalks, right of ways, and school property in right of ways.

Professor Papandrea noted by way of background that some categories of expressive activities have either no or limited First Amendment protection. These include knowingly defamatory statements, true threats intending to communicate an intent to commit an act of violence, and incitement which encompasses statements that are directed to inciting immediate unlawful activity. She shared that there is no category of unprotected speech called “hate speech”, and government generally has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its

content. She discussed some specific school related exceptions to the First Amendment that included speech that is substantially disruptive to a school. Content-neutral time, place, and manner restrictions are permissible. She stated that a Supreme Court case (Tinker v. Des Moines) recognized that speech that undermines the operation of a school can be restricted, and she suggested any ordinance should be limited to times when the school is in session.

At the May 25, 2023 meeting, Task Force members divided into three groups to discuss four questions under the rubric, “Where Do We Go from Here?”:

- 1) What have we learned about external public school safety issues in Orange County?
- 2) Is there more information that we need to gather? Are there clarifications needed?
- 3) Are there ways that we can improve the safety of public-school students and staff from external threats?
- 4) Are there any recommendations to the BOCC for changes in policies or practices?

Members of the public in attendance were invited to join one of the groups of their own selection. After discussion, the groups reported to each other their responses to the questions. Among their reported informal findings were that:

- the school districts’ stakeholders make safety a priority;
- safety is at the forefront of every day;
- SROs are appreciated and needed;
- a yearly summit of stakeholders concerning school safety would be useful;
- training on school safety should be school specific; and
- different levels of disruption call for different response protocols.

The recommendations below were developed from this meeting’s discussions as well during the review of a draft Report at the June 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

**Detailed Summaries of the Task Force’s six meetings are available at the following link:**

**<https://www.orangecountync.gov/AgendaCenter/Search/?term=&CIDs=38,&startDate=&endDate=&dateRange=&dateSelector=>**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its work and discussions, the Task Force recommends:

1. Annual meetings of the Task Force or other group be convened by the BOCC to review policies that address safety in the school districts and provide education on laws addressing school disruptions.
2. Quarterly meetings of school staff involved in school safety issues and law enforcement to continue to be held to discuss coordination and communication regarding safety.
3. The physical boundaries of each school in the school districts be identified and shared with stakeholders, including law enforcement, emergency management, school staff, parents, and others involved in school safety.
4. Assessments of improvements to school buildings regarding safety as well as funding for such improvements be continued.
5. Law enforcement, schools, and emergency management continue to follow Standard Response Protocols and evaluate approaches that are individualized for each school.
6. The roles of SROs, teachers, and staff be clearly communicated among all stakeholders.
7. Annual surveys of teachers and students' perceptions of safety and disruption of schools be promulgated and evaluated for promoting safety.
8. Common definitions and accessible language for terms and first responder codes involved in school safety (ie., "disruption", "external threats", "lockdown") be developed for both school districts and the community.
9. Outreach should continue on a coordinated basis with the public about how the community can support school safety.

Attachment A

Updated 1/31/23,  
2/6/23, 2/7/23, 3/3/23  
4/19/23, 5/2/23

**ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOLS SAFETY TASK FORCE  
CHARGE, COMPOSITION, and TIMELINE**

**Task Force Charge:** (as amended by the Board of Commissioners on April 18, 2023)

1. Discuss ways in which the Orange County government, schools, law enforcement, and community can enhance the safety of the school environment to protect from external threats and promote the education of Orange County K-12 public school students;
2. Recommend to the Board of County Commissioners new or amended policies, ordinances, and/or practices that will address those external threats and provide a safer school environment for our students, teachers, and staff.

**Task Force Composition:**

Position #	Representation	Appointment	Email/Phone
1	Resident – Chapel Hill Carrboro City School District	Ari Schein	<a href="mailto:Ari.schein@gmail.com">Ari.schein@gmail.com</a> 407-408-6913
2	Resident – Chapel Hill Carrboro City School District	Cassie Rice	<a href="mailto:cassiecrice@gmail.com">cassiecrice@gmail.com</a> 919-604-1027
3	Resident – Orange County School District	Kate O’Boyle	<a href="mailto:kto160@comcast.net">kto160@comcast.net</a> 860-460-0144
4	Resident – Orange County School District	Richard Bradford	<a href="mailto:rb16565@icloud.com">rb16565@icloud.com</a> 919-428-3822
5	Orange County Schools Student	Evelyn Estrada Hernandez	<a href="mailto:evelyn.estradahs17@orange.k12.nc.us">evelyn.estradahs17@orange.k12.nc.us</a> NO PHONE NUMBER
6	Orange County Schools Student	Evan Sredzienski	<a href="mailto:evan.sredziensks12@orange.k12.nc.us">evan.sredziensks12@orange.k12.nc.us</a> NO PHONE NUMBER
7	Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools Student	Pending	

8	Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools Student	Pending	
9	Board of Commissioners Representative	Jean Hamilton	<a href="mailto:jhamilton@orangecountync.gov">jhamilton@orangecountync.gov</a> 919-360-0428
10	Board of Commissioners Representative	Earl McKee	<a href="mailto:emckee@orangecountync.gov">emckee@orangecountync.gov</a> 919-812-3248
11	Board of Education Representative – CHCCS	Rani Dasi	<a href="mailto:rdasi@chccs.k12.nc.us">rdasi@chccs.k12.nc.us</a> 919-869-7055 George Griffin (Alternate) <a href="mailto:ggriffin@chccs.k12.nc.us">ggriffin@chccs.k12.nc.us</a> 919-306-2924
12	Superintendent or Designee - CHCCS	Nyah Hamlett	<a href="mailto:nyahhamlett@chccs.k12.nc.us">nyahhamlett@chccs.k12.nc.us</a> 919-967-8211 x28226 Tracy Holloway (Alternate) <a href="mailto:tholloway@chccs.k12.nc.us">tholloway@chccs.k12.nc.us</a> 919-967-8211 ext. 28285 Andre Stewart (Alternate) <a href="mailto:adstewart@chccs.k12.nc.us">adstewart@chccs.k12.nc.us</a> 919-967-8211 ext. 28228
13	Board of Education Representative – OCS	Andre Richmond	<a href="mailto:andre.richmond.boe@orange.k12.nc.us">andre.richmond.boe@orange.k12.nc.us</a> 919-245-4030 ext. 25040
14	Superintendent or Designee - OCS	Monique Felder	<a href="mailto:monique.felder@orange.k12.nc.us">monique.felder@orange.k12.nc.us</a> 919-732-8126 x10001 Lee Williams II (Alternate) <a href="mailto:lee.williamsii@orange.k12.nc.us">lee.williamsii@orange.k12.nc.us</a> 919-732-8126 x11000 Andrew Poole (Alternate) <a href="mailto:andrew.poole@orange.k12.nc.us">andrew.poole@orange.k12.nc.us</a> 919-732-4581

15	Sheriff Designee	or	Tina Sykes	<a href="mailto:TRimmer@orangecountync.gov">TRimmer@orangecountync.gov</a> 919-245-2921  Jonathan McVey (Alternate) <a href="mailto:jomcvey@orangecountync.gov">jomcvey@orangecountync.gov</a> 919-644-3050
16	Carrboro Police Chief Designee	or	Chris Atack	<a href="mailto:catack@carrboronc.gov">catack@carrboronc.gov</a>  (919) 918-7407
17	Chapel Hill Police Chief Designee	or	Paul Bell	<a href="mailto:pbell@townofchapelhill.org">pbell@townofchapelhill.org</a>  919-968-2760
18	Hillsborough Police Chief Designee	or	Andy Simmons	<a href="mailto:andy.simmons@hillsboroughnc.gov">andy.simmons@hillsboroughnc.gov</a>  919-624-9522

**Task Force Timeline:**

The Task Force will conduct its meetings between January and June of 2023, holding a minimum of six (6) meetings during that timeframe.