

Maple Grove Security Task Force

Update and Recommendations

Over the past two months, the MG Security Task Force has reviewed recommendations submitted by the MG community, considered solutions in place at other schools, and gathered the advice (and restrictions) by experts at the Jefferson County Schools Office of Security and Emergency Management.

At this time, we have a solution recommendation for the MG Community.

So that our recommendation will make sense, it is important for us first to share what we have learned about the planned Secure Front Entry System, which is a planned security investment being made at all Elementary Schools throughout Jeffco.

Background on planned Jeffco Secure Front Entry System:

The school district is investing in a Secure Front Entry System for all Elementary Schools (variations of security entry systems will also be made to Junior and Senior High schools, but this is not covered here).

The System includes a security door at the front entrance, coupled with a video/audio camera that will transmit live images of the visitor onto a 36" monitor in the front office. Visitors can communicate with the front office via the video/audio, and the front office can buzz visitors into the school.

The Jeffco Schools Security Office will have a direct connection to this video system, as will the Jefferson County law enforcement and fire protection forces. AT ANY TIME, the front office can press a button, and the live images from our system will override other video feeds on the Jeffco Schools and law enforcement / fire protection monitors, for an instant capture of what is happening at our front door. Photos from this feed can also be transmitted to all police vehicles.

This system is planned to be installed at Maple Grove in February / March 2014.

Task Force Recommendations for interim / additional security measures:

1. **Add Video Surveillance to entire MG campus.** The capability that will come with the Secure Front Entry System can be extended to other views of the school, which will provide intruder surveillance and protection of the cottages, back and side doors of the school, and concealed grounds such as the back bridge and walkway.

Security experts from Jeffco schools will evaluate the MG campus and recommend sites for additional cameras so that there are views of all buildings, doors and student areas.

Up to 15 additional cameras can be hooked into the Secure Front Entry System, thus providing instantaneous viewing and transmittal of potential problems to Jeffco Security and law enforcement.

In addition, it is *highly likely* that MG will be "moved up" on the installation list because we want to add additional capability. Thus, the full system would be operational before Feb / Mar 2014.

While we have not had the campus evaluated yet, the highest anticipated cost for the additional capability is \$25,000. However, a few other Jeffco schools have pursued this same solution, and the district has paid for half of the cost. In other words, the district

has an additional fund set aside for security, and they have said that if we raise / appropriate \$12,500.00, the district will match those funds.

*** Important notes:

- **The MG PTA has \$12,500 available.** We do not need to raise additional funds. The PTA can seek a vote of the members to agree to allocate these funds.
- \$12,500 is the maximum anticipated cost. The actual cost will be determined based on the evaluation, which has not yet been scheduled.
- MG may choose not to install the full system this year. We may choose to add several additional cameras this year (at a lower cost), and then add more cameras at a later point in time.
- These cameras can be active at all times, thus providing security before / after school.

Several other Jeffco schools have already implemented advanced capabilities such as additional cameras. The Task Force plans to visit at least one school to see the capabilities firsthand. Thus, we are not the “guinea pigs”, and we can benefit from the learnings of others.

Finally, as part of the district rollout, there will be staff training on the system, including the advancements that we choose to add. Details of the training will be forthcoming, as the rollout progresses.

2. **Enhance the WatchDOG program.** The WatchDOG program gathered strength in it's second year at MG, but we hope to strengthen it further. Additional “eyes and ears” around the campus provides a significant security advantage, and a threat deterrent.

The district has a fully developed WatchDOG program and an extensive support system, with tools, ideas, etc. The district expert will be coming to MG this fall to help us promote and gain excitement for the program.

We are looking to formalize the WatchDOG program, and we need a parent volunteer to lead this effort. As mentioned above, we do not need to re-create any wheels; there are lots of resources and support to draw from, we just need a person to take the lead. If you are interested, please let us know!

In addition, there has been interest among women to be a part of the historically-male WatchDOG program. If there is sufficient interest the program may be expanded to include “Mama Bears.”

3. **Law Enforcement “HUB” at MG.** Jefferson County law enforcement officers (from Jeffco Sherriff's Dept) are out patrolling and often have a lot of paperwork to complete. It is helpful for them to have a location “in the field” where they can complete paper work instead of being on the side of the road.

Other Jeffco schools have invited patrol officers to come into their school and have set aside a desk or small office for them to work. Some schools have gone as far as to stock a mini-fridge with sodas and snacks, and promoted the availability of their “clean and private” adult bathrooms.

It's a win-win: the officers have a comfortable place to go, and we have them in the school and their cars in the front drive. No better deterrent.

Jeffco schools highly supports this type of relationship with law enforcement. Mr. Stone is in favor of pursuing it. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that we designate a space within the school, establish this as a PTA program (with a chair / co-chair), and that we begin to engage the appropriate law enforcement branches.

4. **Maple Grove Identification Cards.** In order to aid the front office and WatchDOGS or other staff, the Task Force recommends issuing MG Identity Cards to each family. These cards would not be person-specific, but instead would be universal. Each family would be issued several cards to keep in their cars, wallets, etc. These cards will be deliberately identifiable – such as odd shape/size and neon colored.

When a family member needed to visit the school, s/he can show the very “identifiable” card to the front office via the security camera and/or show it / display it via clip on their clothes for the staff / WatchDOG as they move around the school. The cards would not replace the need to sign in at the front desk, but it would be a way to quickly identify “who belongs” at the school vs those that are unexpected or non-routine visitors.

Next Steps:

The most urgent recommendation – adding video surveillance to the MG Campus – will require a vote of the PTA members / board in order to allocate funds. If this measure is approved, Maple Grove can conduct the site assessment and begin to build a plan for implementation.

The Task Force will publicize the WatchDOG and law enforcement Hub ideas, and recruit leaders for these programs.

The Task Force is still evaluating the cost / ability to implement the ID Card solution. The need for this solution and the timing is also based on approval of the security system. More information is forthcoming.

Questions can be directed to:

Security Task Force Co-Chairs: Becky Hoskins, Barbara Pagonis

Task Force: Jane Hittle, Malisa Eakins, Kelly Birdsey, Amy Ruhl, Josh Klinger, Alex Rossano, Ben Noller, Marci Anderson, Wade Bombenger.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Does the school district support these plans?** Yes, we have reviewed these plans with John McDonald, Executive Director of Security and Emergency Management, and he supports the above recommendations. Mr. McDonald is the expert that told us about the likelihood of Jeffco matching funds for the additional capability, and the likelihood that MG will be “moved up” in line for system implementation if we proceed with additional capability.
2. **When will the security system be implemented?** We first must have a site assessment, which we will request as soon as possible. After the assessment and recommendations, our school will be scheduled for implementation. It is currently scheduled for February / March 2014, but we hope to move forward this timeline (summer or fall 2013), if we add additional capability to the system.
3. **Who will install the security system?** Jeffco schools has designated specific vendors that are capable of installing these systems with all of the connectivity to the district and law enforcement monitoring stations. One of these approved vendors will be tasked with the implementation.
4. **Did the Task Force consider hiring security personnel as an interim solution?** Yes, this idea was considered, but we quickly learned that it was not possible. Current Colorado laws and district policy prevent the armed security personnel in Elementary schools. Ultimately, security personnel presents a danger for both the security personnel and the students:
 - a. If a perpetrator does enter the school, the security personnel are most often the first “targets.”

- b. Responding law enforcement does not recognize security personnel, and they are often mistaken for the perpetrator, and harmed.
 - c. Security personnel do not train with the law enforcement personnel and schools, therefore they are not up to speed on the specific procedures or tactics of responders.
5. **Will the front entry system and/or front windows be made of bullet-proof glass?** Unfortunately, there are no plans for bullet-proof glass. The cost is prohibitive. Instead, the focus of security is on visibility, and therefore early detection and prevention.
6. **Will MG have “panic buttons” as part of our solution?** Yes, we have panic buttons installed already at MG, in locations undisclosed for security purposes. The staff is aware of these locations and has been trained on their use.