



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Duplin County's Board of Education and Sheriff's Office Issue Joint Statement Regarding School Resource Officers, School Safety Measures

KENANSVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA – JUNE 20, 2022- Duplin County Schools and the Duplin County Sheriff's Office have a powerful partnership centered around one common goal: to provide safe learning, teaching, and working environments throughout Duplin County Schools (DCS). One of the most effective strategies to help ensure school safety is the inclusion of School Resource Officers (SROs). It is not unusual for SROs to be part of a school district; however, in many places, SROs are shared among schools. This is not the case in Duplin County where we are very fortunate that for almost ten years every school has been assigned a full-time, sworn, and trained SRO. We celebrate our SROs and we are grateful for all they do for our students, staff, and community!

School Resource Officers are sworn armed deputies who have at least one year of law enforcement experience in order to be considered for the SRO program. Their specialized initial SRO training and continuous education includes areas such as school-based law, working with exceptional students, classroom management, identification and reduction of gang-related activities, risk factors and warning signs of a variety of mental health challenges common among juveniles, and more.

Present throughout our schools before, during, and after the school day, our SROs are law enforcement officers whose duties encompass many roles such as counselor, mentor, teacher, and role model. They provide specialized resources and guidance to staff members and collaborate with school staff to develop strategies to prevent and resolve challenges. Some of our SROs also coach in our middle and high schools and community sports leagues, which enables them to build even stronger relationships with the students they serve. Ultimately SROs greatly assist to reduce the risk of violence and crime on school campuses, including response to critical incidents, like active shooters.

We have had Crisis Management Plans in place for over two decades in Duplin County. Strategies to address situations such as an active shooter, bomb threat, disturbance, inclement weather, operational emergency and more are integral parts of the plans. While we are legally unable to share specific information about crisis response, we want to assure all community members that a wide variety of safety measures are in place. Since the implementation of the plan, we have continuously reviewed and revised, as needed, the components of the plan. Staff members participate in annual Critical Incident (Crisis and Active Shooter) training conducted by the Duplin County Sheriff's Office. Periodic assessments, including monthly drills, are also conducted to evaluate facility safety and help ensure staff and students are aware of how to react in the event of a crisis.

Nothing will ever be as important to us as the safety of our citizens, especially our most vulnerable ones- the children of Duplin County. We remain committed to the continuation of our partnership and our collaborative efforts to help ensure our students, teachers, and staff learn, teach, and work in the safest possible environments.

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For more information, please contact the Superintendent's Office at (910) 296-6615