

## Safe and Supportive Schools: Questions Every Parent Should Ask Their School

Parents are essential partners in their children's education. They provide educators and school leaders with important information, perspective and insight on their children. It is therefore critical that parents have a seat at the table whenever decisions are made that impact their children, particularly on the issues of school safety and student support services.

It is important to first learn and understand from school leadership what is happening at their child's school regarding school safety; however, many families are not sure of what questions to ask.

### What questions should parents, guardians and family members ask your school Principal to ensure your child is attending a safe and supportive school?

#### School safety protocols:

1. Does our school have a school safety team? If yes, who is on it?  
**Tip:** It should be an interdisciplinary team of school leaders, school employed mental health practitioners, families and local law enforcement.
2. Does our school have a current school safety policy in place? If yes,
  - Where can I review the current policy?
  - What is included?
  - How often is it evaluated and updated?
3. Does our school have a threat assessment protocol? If yes, what does it include?  
**Tip:** It should include how to identify student threats, how to determine the seriousness of the threat, and how to develop intervention plans that protect potential victims and address the underlying problem or conflict that stimulated the threatening behavior.
4. What type of building safety measures are in place?  
**Tip:** Consider visitor check-in/check-out systems, proper lighting, and secure access points to the school campus (parking lots, playgrounds, playing fields).
5. Does our school have physical security measures in place? If yes, how are decisions regarding physical security made?  
**Tip:** Decisions should be locally determined, collaborative and specifically include input from students, parents, families, educators, school leaders and the community.
6. Does our school have a school resource officer or other type of security personnel on school premises? If yes,
  - What type of training have they received? Is it ongoing?
  - Are they armed?
  - What is their role and authority in the event of an actual emergency?**Tip:** Roles and responsibilities should be clearly outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding.
7. Are school safety drills conducted throughout the school year? If yes, what can students and parents expect from these drills?

8. In the event of an actual emergency
  - How are students evacuated from the building?
  - How are parents and students reunited?

Student support services:

9. What type of student mental health and wellness support services are available?
10. How many of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses does our school have?
11. Is training offered to all school-based employees on early intervention, prevention and access to school and community based mental health services?
12. What are the policies regarding bullying, harassment and discipline?
13. In the event of an actual emergency, what psychological support measures are in place?

Communication:

14. Is there anonymous reporting and response procedures where students, staff, and families can report concerning behaviors or potential threats?
15. How are families and students notified about school safety drills conducted?
16. How are families notified if there is a school safety threat or incident?
17. How can students and parents provide ongoing input on the school environment and climate?