

Questions from Community & School Safety Night

Red = Essex Town

Green = CCSU

1. (Town Planners): What is the vision of town planning on schools?
Income/rental occupied vs. owner occupied.
At www.Essex.org, the Town Plan can be viewed.

2. What can be done to establish mentors for youth?
CHIPS administers youth mentoring programs in both Essex Town schools and the Essex Junction schools.

A recent grant (Mentoring Grant from the VT Mentoring Collaborative) to further advance mentoring opportunities at Essex Junction's Fleming and ADL schools is underway.

3. (CHIPS) How do children who do not live in the Junction access services such as CHIPS/Teen center?

4. How do we regulate who is coming and going in our schools?
Across CCSU, all visitors are requested to sign in upon arrival (and sign out upon departure). If the visitor will be traveling into the school, a visitor's badge is to be worn.

In ETSD, all visitors are expected to stop at the office and sign in if they have a reason to stay in the building as volunteer or to attend a meeting. Additionally, visitors who plan on staying in the school must wear a visitor badge and leave their car keys at the front desk.

5. Exactly what drills are practiced in the schools? How do families get this information?

In ETSD 9 scheduled drills are practiced each year.

3 Clear the Halls Drills

3 Secure the Building Drills

3 Evacuate the Building Drills

Practice drills and if needed, real emergency drills, are communicated to parents via email on the day of the event.

Across CCSU, state law {16 V.S.A. § 1481: "Fire and emergency preparedness drills"} directs the frequency, forms, and documentation of drills.

(a) The principal or person in charge of a public or independent school or educational institution, other than a university or college, shall drill the pupils so that they may be able to leave the school building or perform other procedures described in the school's emergency preparedness

plan, or both in the shortest possible time and without panic or confusion.

(b) A drill shall be held at least once in each month during the school year and a record of the date and time of such drill together with the time consumed in completing the procedure, shall be kept in the official school register, and such register shall be open at all times for inspection by representatives from the fire safety division of the department of public safety or the department of education.

6. What “words” are said at the elementary schools in a safety drill?
(Crisis Commands)

In ETSD: ***Classroom Crisis Commands***

Clear the Halls – Students should remain in a supervised location or move to the closest room supervised by an adult. Close and lock door and shut curtains/blinds on doors and windows (if available). Instruction may continue and doors can be opened to allow students in. Students outdoors move away from the building to designated safety areas. This command may be used for situations such as medical emergencies or for privacy reasons.

Secure the Building – Go to closest room supervised by an adult. Adult accomplishes a quick visual check of hallway. Close and lock door. Students and staff remain away from doors and windows and remain quiet. Turn off lights and shut curtains/blinds on doors and windows. Designated staff secure exterior doors to “lock down” the building. Students outdoors move away from building to designated safety areas. Only use classroom communication devices for in-room emergencies. Do not open doors or react to a fire alarm unless instructed to do so by an administrator.

Shelter in Place – Faculty, students, and staff should seek shelter inside the building second floor if possible and close all windows and doors. The custodian/property service representative will turn off air handling equipment if appropriate. This command may be used for situations such as weather emergencies or air pollution concerns.

Evacuate the Building – In an orderly fashion, exit the building taking evacuation materials. Teacher takes attendance with assigned students and reports attendance data. When directed, return to the building or move from the evacuation staging area to the designated Relocation Site.

CCSU and ET work to be identical in our language. The specifics (as above) are posted on placards in each classroom.

7. What can we learn from other schools who design/train/implement student-based anti-bullying “teams?”

The best way to determine if our efforts to prevent bullying from occurring in our schools are working, is through the testimony of students and the analysis of incidence data that is collected by school personnel. School procedures that include students in this important work in meaningful ways tend to show better results.

We are always open to learn from others who have adopted successful programs.

8. Where do we find out what school safety curriculum is in place?

In ETSD: Although we don't teach a safety curriculum, all 3 schools have a guidance/health curriculum that address personal safety and the safety of others. Contact the school's Principal directly for more information.

There are so many aspects of safety education. Personal safety (including bullying prevention) is embedded within the health and guidance curricula. Act 1 (sexual violence prevention education) curriculum is in place, but not posted. Internet safety is published on www.ccsuvt.org (and linked from each school's site.)

9. Why aren't school buses outfitted with seat belts and mandatory wearing?

Research shows that equipping school buses with seat belts can create more dangerous conditions for riders. The interiors of busses have changed over the years to better protect riders in the event of a vehicle mishap. This research was embraced by the Vermont General Assembly a few years ago when a bill was being considered.

10. Where are the messages to “Where are your children/do you know where your children are?”

In ETSD: Currently there isn't a concerted effort by any of the schools to amplify this important message to parents and family members. Something to consider. Perhaps the PTO can play a role here?

CCSU: We are familiar with this important message once being a public service announcement (PSA) on radio and television, but have not migrated this message as a school responsibility.

11. Can we increase crossing guards to previous staffing levels?

In ETSD: There are no crossing guards.

The numbers of crossing guards in Essex Junction have ebbed and flowed over time. The high number was twenty-two, and we are now staffed at nineteen. We assess demographic changes and pedestrian patterns to assign locations with guards. The 2013-14 Essex Junction school budget (to be voted in April) does not reflect changes to the current number of guards.

12. Can teachers serve to connect families with one another on a rotating basis for purposes of expanding “community” and growing relationships?

This naturally happens through the classroom community. Beyond the classroom, the PTO may be in a better position to facilitate connections among families through well organized and family-based events.

CCSU: (same response)

13. How do we engage kids to model safe behavior?

This is an ongoing process in our schools. All staff no matter what their title is, have a responsibility to model/teach what safe and respectful looks like and to hold students accountable to practice these skills on a regular basis. Most learning happens through incidental events. Meaning, when unsafe behavior is happening, it needs to be immediately interrupted and discussed with the student(s) involved. When school personnel are vigilant in their teaching, monitoring and intervention efforts, the incidence rate of unsafe behavior decreases. Parents play the most important role in teaching their children the importance of being responsible citizens.

CCSU: (same response)

14. How do we balance the need to maintain community schools and the

safety of schools?

The purpose of the community event on 2/19/13 was to invite citizens to share their particular points of view which ultimately become factors into future decisions concerning the question above. School Board members are the trustees of our local schools and therefore play an important role in considering the pros/cons of any given number of opinions that individual community members have.

15. What are we doing to ensure our walkers are safe?

In ETSD: The schools rely on parents to teach safe/responsible walking behavior to their children and monitor their behavior on a daily basis. All students in ETSD have the option to ride the bus.

16. Is there crosswalk training for children in schools?

CCSU: Yes, at some EJ schools.

17. All decisions should be made with safety as the lens/focus (safety the #1 priority).

18. Make sure teachers are willing to update their feelings in regards to electronic devices and communication, both in classroom and outside.

19. Has the number or percent of kids participating in sports declined?

In ETSD: Approximately 30% of students in middle school participate in extracurricular activities sponsored by the school.

CCSU: Numbers of participants in athletics ebbs and flows with the overall school enrollment patterns, but the percentage of students who participate in sports has held constant.

20. Can we get parents more accountable for children's actions?

In ETSD: An ongoing need.

CCSU: We welcome shared accountability for children's actions.

21. Why when you invite the community do you invite more than parents?

Not the whole community.

This is an area that we are discussing more frequently. If not attending school related functions, how can schools do a better job letting non-parents know what is going on in our local schools and the ways in which they can be more involved?

CCSU: Not entirely clear on the question. If the question concerns non-parents' attendance at school events, we welcome all citizens.

22. How do we prepare for school services for ESL students?

In ETSD: We have a full time ESL teacher and a full time instructional assistant who work directly with students and train general education teachers in the area of lesson design and instructional practice. We believe that the ESL student population in Essex Town will increase in the future. Preparing for a possible increase in this population of students is challenging given the variables associated with family migration patterns.

CCSU: (same response)

23. EJ is not a "walking district" for all children. Some kids are more at risk due to their proximity to situations.

24. Can we help build car-pooling networks (given the absence of bussing in EJ)?

ADL Parents as Partners is starting this program. See the ADL web site for more information.

25. Is there the possibility of providing the Nurturing Program?

In ETSD: The Nurturing Program has not been formally discussed.

CCSU: Unclear which "Nurturing Program" is meant.

26. Why can't doors be locked and visitors buzzed in at schools?

see #14

CCSU: This was discussed at the boards' level a few years ago, and the boards declined to institute this type of system. (Similar ideas about metal detectors were also discussed, and not agreed upon.)

27. How do we control members of the public coming to a school function when these individual(s) do not have children/grand-children in school?

CCSU: We welcome the attendance of community members at

events.

28. How can we get information to busy parents who want to mentor?

See # 2

29. Have there been conversations about having (armed or unarmed) guards in our schools?

In ETSD: Not to our knowledge.

CCSU: No.

30. Why aren't the front doors of schools locked?

see #14

31. Why aren't schools' front doors locked?

see #14

32. Where are the cameras, and how many cameras are there in each school (#s of cameras In each school)?

In ETSD: One camera exists in the lobby of Founders Memorial School due to the poor sight line between the front entrance and office.

CCSU: For security purposes, we chose not to divulge the specific location of all cameras; also, locations change. There are 59 currently in use. At all schools there is one camera at the main entrance and for the elementary schools there is a camera for the playground / recess area.

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33. Do people monitor the school security cameras?

In ETSD: Two monitors exist in the office and a "chime" is activated whenever someone walks through the front entrance.

Within CCSU, all can be. Some schools' front-entrance cameras are viewed in "real time" by school Assistants (with auditory cues). Generally, other cameras are not monitored in "real time."

34. Is there more or less bullying now that it's more widely recognized?

In ETSD: Based on a new set of procedures that were administered in the fall of 2012, there has been a slight decrease in bullying incidents at this point in the school year.

CCSU: We don't believe there is more bullying, but rather that educators are increasingly skilled at recognizing (and intervening). The state's scope for schools' responsibilities to bullying now goes beyond schoolhouse.