

Safety measures are taken at Re-1J schools

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

With an ever-present commitment to the well-being of the students in the Re-1J School District, the security policy has been continually regulated and revised to make sure every possible step is taken to help prevent the schools of Holyoke from becoming the site of the next devastating tragedy.

All entrances, which are electronically controlled, are on schedule, locking automatically right after the first bell of the day. Initially the front doors were kept unlocked, but with the recent tragedies around the country, the front doors now remain locked throughout the day. Students and visitors alike have to buzz in, and secretaries, who can view those trying to enter by cameras, will determine if they have a reason to be in the building.

All parents, guardians and visitors will be required to check in with the office and obtain a visitor badge before being permitted past the second set of glass doors at the elementary school. All parents, guardians and visitors will also be barred from entering the lobby after school as they will have to wait outside for their children.



Kia Kassman, pictured at left, gives Pastor Gary Rahe a quick tutorial on the new entrance protocols at Holyoke JR/SR High School before letting him in. □ □
—Enterprise photo

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Students are encouraged to not open the door for strangers outside the building.

“We have spent a lot of time encouraging our kids to be very friendly and very receptive to people, to help them out, and here is a case where we are going to have to do some un-training,” Holyoke Elementary Principal Kyle Stumpf said. “At the elementary level, I think the school shooting back East was more enlightening, because it can happen to a small school our size. They had very similar practices and protocols, a very similar type of reaction that we would have, and it happened there.”

“They (the students) are getting better now,” Lori Thompson, secretary at the JR/SR high school, said. “They are learning. We have had to talk to them a couple of times that the purpose of the door is to keep people out. We are not supposed to be polite and let them in, especially when we don’t know who they are, but they are catching on.”

Susan Ortner, principal of the JR/SR high school, mentioned that the changes have been met with little resistance and almost no negative feedback.

Upgrades were also made to the cameras at the JR/SR high school, and some were additionally installed at the elementary school over the summer. Staff members have now been instructed to wear their identification badges to help the students identify those who belong.

Typically, nobody expects a tragedy like that of the Connecticut school shooting will happen in their town, especially in a small community, but Colorado has been thrust into the spotlight before.

As Superintendent Bret Miles pointed out, “Colorado in particular, in 2006 with Platte Valley and in 1999 with Columbine, we haven’t gone too many years without something right in our own state.”

He also noted that Colorado has been forced to be ahead of the curve in some security issues

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for all of the wrong reasons.

Initial updates to the Crisis Response Plan began during the 2010-2011 school year. Local sheriffs, police officers, firefighters, hospital workers and neighboring district members came together to devise a plan, go through drills and make adjustments based on those drills.

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