



Holly Area Schools

Excellence in Action!

April 28, 2023

Dear Families and Staff of Holly Area Schools,

Thank you for everything you do to help ensure a safe, nurturing learning environment for our Bronchos. Working together, the safety, security and well-being of our entire school community remains our number one priority.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some important updates in our continued efforts to build on and enhance our districtwide safety and security measures.

Beginning with the 2018 Bond, we made it a priority to redesign the front of our school buildings to include secure entrances and install thumb-turn security locks in each classroom. At the same time, we also made a commitment to ongoing ALICE training for our staff. This has evolved to also include refresher training each year. In addition, designated administrators have been trained in threat assessment protocols.

At the beginning of 2020, we added a second full-time School Resource Police Officer to our team, and in January 2022 we added three Armed Security Guards. During that same month, we made a considerable investment in the Nightlock Door Security Devices. Since that time, we have also updated and added new security cameras throughout the district, conducted a safety assessment, and upgraded our office public announcement systems.

We are now in the process of conducting critical incident mapping of our buildings and acquiring new two-way radios. The critical incident mapping process uses satellite imaging to create a real-life depiction of a building and surrounding area with labels to create a valuable map and grid to help first responders communicate their location more accurately.

Today, I am excited to announce the addition of a third School Resource Police Officer as the next logical step in our continued efforts to enhance safety and security districtwide. Matthew Patercsak, a former State Trooper, has joined the Holly Police Department and will be our designated elementary level SRO effective May 1. Officer Patercsak recently did a tour of the district, and joins Officer Houck and Officer Wolkow as our School Resource Police Officers.

Our partnership with the Holly Police Department has grown immensely over the past few years, and has been pivotal in providing onsite security. This has contributed to a team approach to many investigations with our administrative team.

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In support of this partnership, it is important that our School Resource Police Officers have access to the same tools that an arriving patrol officer would have during an active shooter situation at a school building. Seconds count in these situations, as we have learned throughout our training and sadly from incidents in other schools across our nation. The ability of our SROs to quickly engage and accurately stop a threat is critical to saving lives.

A valuable tool for police officers in these situations is a long rifle. While our School Resource Police Officers have secured rifles in their patrol vehicles, leaving the building to access this tool can cost precious time. As another level of support to security in our district, we have partnered with Holly PD to install secure safes in strategic locations of each building's office. These are biometric safes that can **only** be opened by designated law enforcement officers with the Holly Police Department. Biometric means that the safes may only be opened with an approved code and thumb print. The safes cannot be opened by any district personnel or be opened by our district's security guards. This is a tool for our Holly Police Officers and we hope that it is never needed. The ability to have ready access to the safes will allow our district to best prepare to mitigate any potential threat.

As an important balance to these responsive efforts for enhanced security, we are also investing in proactive measures to improve the way we engage with our students. I want to give many kudos to the staff participating in the Reimagination efforts and the Strategic Planning workshops with our Fielding International partners. Through this process, we are reviewing new ways to engage all students in meaningful learning, support stronger peer relationships, and promote the understanding of valuable social competencies. This includes exploring more ways to increase student involvement in activities before, during, and after school with their peers.

In addition, we are also excited to announce that a certified therapy dog will also be joining the Broncho Team next Fall. The pup, which was recently named Oakley, by the high school student body, will soon be participating in official training in preparation for the 2023 – 2024 school year. More information coming before the end of the school year.

Finally, we are continuing to grow our mental health and wellness team with added social workers. Our team has grown in the past year, and we truly look forward to working with all of our staff in this continuous effort to support our students, families, and each other.

Working together, we are #BronchosUnited.

Sincerely,

Scott M. Roper, Superintendent - Holly Area Schools

Jerry Narsh, Chief of Police – Village of Holly

