

Superintendent Runcie's Prepared Remarks to MSD PSC - August 15, 2019

Good morning and thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. Before I get to my prepared remarks, I am going to comment on some the issues that arose during yesterday's meeting.

First, as for the discussion of **charter schools being in compliance**, I wholeheartedly agree with the Commission that the responsibility for compliance with SB7030 is on the Charter Schools, not on law enforcement, to provide coverage. And I agree that authority to hold charter schools accountable rests with the School Board. That's why I have communicated repeatedly that we will move to shut down any school that is non-compliant. In fact, we have sent one letter informing a charter school that they are in non-compliance and that we will move to revoke their charter because of not having an SSO yesterday. But I do not have the authority to revoke a charter because a school does not have a long-term, sustainable plan. We must monitor. And if there is not compliance then we will sanction.

The **discussion of the "29 charter schools"** that occurred yesterday was about those lacking a long-term sustainable plan. That is a different question than who is compliant presently.

A review of the timeline on this matter is important. SB7030 went into effect on May 8 and clarified that charters must have a Safe School Officer. This was the result of some charter schools questioning whether SB7026 applied to them. It did.

On *May 15*, we made a presentation to charter school principals on these requirements. On *May 31*, the DOE sent a letter to me and other Superintendents on the charter requirements.

On *July 9*, the charters received a letter from DOE on this matter. On *July 9*, BCPS also mailed a letter to charters on expectations, including the sanction of charter revocation for non-compliance.

On *July 29*, we did a preliminary pull of yet to be compliant schools from our Charter Tools database and provided a list of 16 schools to the DOE. On *August 1*, BCPS again presented before the Charter Principals and reminded them that that day was the deadline for uploading proof of compliance into Charter Tools.

On *August 7*, BCPS submitted a new list to DOE, engaged in subsequent conversation with the DOE, and was informed that other districts were reporting having charters use their Sheriff for an interim coverage on an interim basis even if it was in an overlapping jurisdiction.

On *August 13*, DOE asked for a list of charter schools that do not have a long-term, sustainable plan for compliance. Again, that was different question than any previous ask. And the number of schools on that list was 29.

As for whether BCPS has intentional and thoroughly recruited guardians – we have and continue to recruit intensively. The multiple classes of guardians that the Sheriff 's office has trained have demonstrated that. We have even changed the job requirements to expand the pool. We have not been asked by any charters to recruit guardians for them.

I also want to comment on the question of **law enforcement involvement in threat assessments**, and consequences for those staff members who fail to follow our policy. There is accountability for failure to accurately report data.

In February, I brought discipline for an assistant principal for inaccurate reporting of discipline data. That individual was given a suspension.

On March 5, our new policy on Behavioral Threat Assessment went into effect.

In April, I brought a demotion and two suspensions for failure to properly follow the policy.

These actions were not brought to us from law enforcement. I know this because BCPS has yet to receive specific cases of non-compliance. I am not saying that they have not occurred, but I cannot take action against a general anecdote.

We hear these stories, but nobody ever gives us details. **We're constantly telling everyone if you see something, say something. Well we need someone to send us something.** I need information and facts. Not allegations. I need the names of the parties, the school, ... something to let me tie the assertion of inappropriateness or violation of school board policy to a person.

The first formal notification on this topic from Sheriff Tony, was the July 15 letter. I met with him on July 24 and asked for specific cases to be presented to me. I have yet to receive those details.

This community has my commitment to take disciplinary action when the threat assessment policy is not followed. But I can only do that when I have the facts and not simply general references to times from the past or what someone heard may have happened.

I will have more to say on these, and other matters, later.

There are a **significant number of efforts** that have continued, or have commenced, since I appeared before you nine months ago. Many of our actions were a direct result of the questions and recommendations from this Commission. Let me walk you through the most significant actions we have taken to ensure the safety and security of our community.

And we are by no means done. This is a **continuous improvement process** for. As we learn more and identify opportunities to enhance our commitment to a safe learning environment, we will do so.

We have continued to take a **multi-layered approach** to ensure that our schools are protected.

We are protecting students and staff on school property by ensuring that there is perimeter fencing around the entire campus with limited points of access or a single point of entry. And these points of access are locked during school operation unless there is a staff member present to monitor anyone entering the school property.

Procedures have been established and are being reinforced to monitor parking lots, drop-off/pick-up points, gates, and the exteriors of our campuses throughout the school day. Human eyes and ears are a foundational component of ensuring safety. Technology can enhance, but can never replace, having human beings take care of each other.

And we have backed up this philosophy with significant commitments of budgetary resources. We have increased our spending to improve our ability to both prevent and respond to school-based incidents. We have increased our funding for safety and security. As I discussed with you in November, we went to the voters of Broward County and they passed a referendum that dedicates funding for safety and security which we are utilizing to supplement State funding.

The District has allocated the additional Safe Schools Allocation funding for 2019/20, and the new millage gained through the August 2018 referendum, to increase the District's reimbursement for School Resource Officers (SROs), increase the number of Guardians and source over 500 new security-related positions. When combined with existing resources, there will be over 1200 SROs, Guardians, and security positions deployed throughout the District for the 2019/20 school year.

This represents approximately **\$53 million investment** in security personnel dedicated to enhancing the safety and security at all schools.

By accelerating the expenditure of capital funding, we have moved to have a Single Point of Entry at every school. Yesterday, every school in Broward opened with a functional

Single Point of Entry. Visitors, including contractors and vendors, must access schools through the single point of entry or must be escorted if entering from a loading dock or alternative door.

However, events held on **campus after regular school hours** continue to be a concern as far as providing safety coverage. The reality is that there is inadequate funding or available personnel to extend the full security program at schools beyond normal school hours.

The District has extended SRO agreements with select municipalities or assigned guardians to cover all District-run academic programs during the summer. All before and aftercare programs are now required to develop a security plan, provide for an unarmed security position, and adhere to similar safety and security protocols during operation. For example, maintaining locked perimeter fencing unless a gate is staffed. A plan for securing and monitoring perimeter gates after hours while students and staff are still on campus must be developed by principals, implemented, and communicated to all stakeholder and routinely inspected.

Again, the physical safety of our school campuses is achieved through a multi-layered approach. These layers include fences, single point of entry, visitor badging protocols, having staff present in hallways during transition periods, and locking classroom doors. These are supported with signage to guide community members and visitors, mobile staff, and static staff who are monitoring video feeds.

And when people see something, they need to know how to say something. Community members - students, teachers, administrators and visitors - must know and use the tools available to them. **To report a tip**, Broward County Public Schools provides multiple tools. Let me describe what they are and how they fit together.

We are in the process of complying with the statutory requirement to have **Fortify FL** available on all district issued electronic devices. We have placed FortifyFL on our district and school website landing pages. We have installed this app on existing devices and are moving to include it on the initial image placed on the device at the point of procurement.

We are also supporting the **SaferWatch** mobile application. Both of these provide a way for community members to report, each has some strengths, and we are ensuring that both are promoted on web sites, on signage, and in communication.

Additionally, Broward County Public Schools has **text messaging, anonymous tip lines, and email reporting** mechanisms under our "Silence Hurts" campaign. All of this information is available at browardschools.com/safetyfirst.

As I shared previously, the School Board approved \$3.2 million in September 2018 to staff a **new Safety, Security, & Emergency Preparedness division** to implement an Enterprise

Risk Management (ERM) framework across the entire organization. The sourcing of the new division began in February 2019, with the appointment of a **new Chief, Safety, Security & Emergency Preparedness**. We were fortunate to hire **Brian Katz** for this position. Brian is here with me today. He reports directly to me. He comes to us with law enforcement experience from the United States Department of State, and has conducted security reviews of facilities, procedures and personnel for diplomats and their families in locations around the globe. Additionally, Brian was a security Director for Alphabet/Google, establishing global programs to help protect physical locations, staff, and their families.

His experience is serving the residents of Broward County well in enhancing the District's **culture of safety and security**. He has already made a significant impact on how I, and my entire Cabinet, think and act about how we address safety and security challenges before us.

The Office of Safety, Security, & Emergency Preparedness is integrating the policies, staffing, management, and monitoring of all aspects from school safety operations, district policies for safety and fire drills, and preparations for hurricanes and other perils.

A significant change in our operational approach that **has already occurred** is **eliminating the decentralization of school safety personnel**. These resources no longer directly report to the school principal. In order to ensure consistency in operational execution, campus monitors and school security specialists now report to an area manager that reports to the Office of School Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness. *This is a significant change from Broward Schools culture of decentralization.* There is extensive collaboration between staff in schools, between principal supervisors and area supervisors, and between the Chief of School Performance and Accountability, Dr. Valerie Wanza, and Brian Katz. We must, and will, ensure that safety and security procedures are implemented in a consistent way at every school.

A specific improvement that this new division has established based on this Commission's interim report is in the training and operational procedures for **campus monitors**. In addition to changing the reporting structure, we have extended the contract year for these employees to provide three days of training. There are now **standard training, accountability, and expectations** for these employees far beyond the position description that we discussed in November.

Coordinated through Brian, Broward County Public Schools has worked to **enhance its coordination with law enforcement**. He has met repeatedly with representatives of the Broward Sheriff's Office, municipal police departments, and the Broward County Chiefs of Police Association, where he attends meetings regularly. These meetings are focused on ensuring that there is smooth operations and communications – a **collaborative approach**

between education and law enforcement. I want to highlight some of the areas that this collaboration has focused on in the past six months.

One area is ensuring that law enforcement has **real-time access to school security cameras**. All SROs have access to the cameras for their respective schools. The Broward County Sheriff's Office and its Real-Time Crime Center has access to the District's entire inventory of over 10,000 surveillance cameras. All municipalities that provide SROs have been provided the contracts for access, with appropriate data sharing agreements, for approval by their respective governing body. In the interim, municipal police forces can go through the Sheriff's integrated command center for video access. This was a significant accomplishment as it required policy agreement, technical integration and the establishment of a standard naming convention for cameras. The naming convention must serve the purpose of school operation for those who know the facility well and for law enforcement, and other first responders, who may not know the facility well but need to navigate it during a crisis.

Additionally, **involvement of law enforcement and municipal emergency responders**, with the inspection of facilities and the development of emergency response plans is coordinated with the Office of Safety, Security, and Emergency Preparedness. This includes the completion and review of the **Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool (FSSAT)**. There has not been a submittal of updated FSSATs since my testimony in November. That will occur in the coming six weeks. While we are awaiting access to the final version of the 2019 FSSAT tool from the Department of Education, we have been active in preparing our staff – both district and principals – to complete the assessment tool with fidelity.

These will be completed with high quality responses and that they *will be reviewed by leadership, specifically by me – the Superintendent. I will be reviewing a representative sample with Brian Katz* as his staff will be working with the principal supervisors to ensure that all FSSAT responses are accurate, complete, and that actions are taken to address any issues that arise.

State statute requires that every school has the presence of a **trained, armed School Safety Officer**, either a School Resource Officer or an Aaron Feis Guardian. You have been examining the compliance of public schools - district schools and charter schools – with this mandate in your Commission meetings. BCPS has maintained the compliance that I testified to you about in November. We have, and will, ensure compliance at each of our schools by utilizing SRO contracts and Guardians; and having protocols to provide substitutes with contracted overtime and our own SIU detectives as needed. Yesterday, on our first day of school we had approximately 201 SROs at 179 schools and 47 Guardians.

I want to spend a minute on the issue of **charter school compliance**. While school boards issue the operational agreement for a charter school, there is actually very little a school board can do to impact the compliance of charter schools with statutes or best practices. They

have their own governing body. The only real lever is to pull the charter and shut it down. We have sent repeated notice to charters that they need to be in compliance. They must have a School Safety Officer on campus during all normal school operational hours.

Again, we have informed the charter schools that failure to comply will result in my calling for the School Board of Broward County to convene and immediately revoke the charter for school operation. This would be extremely disruptive to the lives of the students, families and staff of the charter schools. But it is the only, and the right, action to take. We continue to work closely with the DOE's Office of School Safety.

The training on **Behavioral Threat Assessment** procedures provided to district and school personnel is the same training provided to their appropriate law enforcement partners. This is most important at the level of SROs being matched with principals, campus security specialists, and campus monitors. And those schools which have Guardians need to partner with the appropriate law enforcement agency to provide a law enforcement agent on demand. Training is consistent for how to conduct investigations on discipline measures and when those discipline measures may cross the line into criminal conduct. All personnel have been trained that law enforcement **always maintains** the discretion in deciding whether to undertake law enforcement actions.

Significant effort has been focused on training for all administrative staff, the creation of a Behavioral Threat Assessment policy, and the procurement of a centralized, digital documentation system. This system is required for all district schools and has been provided for Broward County charter schools as well. All of these improvements have been completed.

Intensive and on-going training for all school-level administrators on behavioral threat assessment procedures has been paramount. Training commenced prior to the 2018/19 school year. An additional three-hour training using a behavioral threat assessment case study occurred during the school year guided by the new School Board Policy 2130 on Behavioral Threat Assessments. And an additional round of training on the new digital, centralized Behavioral Threat Assessment tool occurred in August 2019. In the past three weeks we have trained 312 elementary, 164 middle school, 210 high school, and 55 charter school administrators. ***And we have trained 165 law enforcement officers.*** There will be additional trainings in the coming weeks. And the training, our policy, and our practice is that law enforcement **MUST** be involved in all threat assessments teams.

A second component was the **elevation of threat assessment accountability from the level of operational procedure to School Board Policy. Policy 2130** was finalized through the statutorily defined rulemaking process on March 5, 2019. This policy establishes definitions of threat levels, roles and responsibilities for people, teams and departments, and establishes an auditing calendar for ensuring fidelity of implementation and compliance. Expectations for building level threat assessment teams, administrator supervisors, and audit processes have

been clarified. And the system of accountability is outlined. This policy was an elevation of behavioral threat assessment expectations to the highest level of our organization.

The third component was the selection, procurement, and implementation of a **digital, centralized threat assessment system** to replace the previous paper, school site documentation system. On February 20, 2019, the SBBC approved a contract with Public Consulting Group, Inc. to develop and implement the system. The design of the system was informed by state law, school district policy and end users. The system design was finalized in June, training on the new system commenced in July with school principals and commenced with law enforcement personnel on Monday, August 12. BCPS and law enforcement continue to be in active communication to ensure that all parties understand the procedures and are involved in all threat assessments.

Another area where BCPS has undertaken significant effort and impact is around **Safer Spaces**. On February 20, 2019, the School Board adopted Policy 2150. We are defining a Safer Space, also called a Hard Corner, as a designated general location where students and staff can more effectively position themselves where they are not visible from a hallway or outside door or window, in an effort to reduce the risk associated with an active shooter. The policy stipulates the manner with which Safer Spaces will be identified, when appropriate, in classrooms. These spaces are marked with standardized visual designators, which mandates that the designated spaces will remain free from clutter, furniture and objects interfering with their use in emergencies, and requires periodic inspections of the spaces to ensure compliance with the policy.

BCPS is implementing the Safer Spaces policy in two phases. The first phase was to have school-based staff identify and mark the Safer Space within all classrooms where there is a single-entry point and the absence of windows on the first floor. This phase yielded the identification of nearly 3,000 Safer Spaces within classrooms throughout the District. The second phase involves teams of Special Investigative Unit (SIU) detectives and District fire inspectors visiting each school to assess the remaining classrooms and identifying any additional Safer Spaces within classrooms. This two-phased approach became necessary because additional expertise was needed to evaluate more “complex” classrooms, where there are multiple entry points or first floor windows to determine whether there is an opportunity to identify a Safer Space. *Security experts have advised that more important than a line or graphic image identifying the Safer Space, is the situational awareness of the occupants in the room to respond to a potential threat.* The District issued guidance to all principals to share with their staff on March 8, 2019. This guidance advised that while all classrooms may not have a Safer Space, every classroom has a “safest space” to utilize in a given situation and all teachers were encouraged to consider various entry points and develop personal options for response in those situations. Teachers and staff were advised to practice their planned response during our Emergency Code drills and to adapt those responses based on the results of the drills.

Additionally, a **training video** was developed providing guidance on Safer-Spaces, which featured footage from Sheriff Gualtieri's discussion with the School Board on February 26, 2019. Thank you, Sheriff, for your visit in the spring and for agreeing to allow us to utilize the footage as part of our professional development for staff.

Another area where policy and training have been enhanced is around **Emergency Codes**. And we elevated the importance of our practice to the level of policy. The School Board adopted Policy 2120 on February 20, 2019, to affirm its existing protocols on emergency codes and protocols.

The policy specifically mandates:

"Any staff member must take appropriate action(s), including initiating a Code Red Lockdown, on a school campus should they see, hear, or smell anything that may immediately impact the safety and security of any staff, students, or visitors on campus. Should a staff member initiate a Code Red which does not materialize into an actual threat, there will not be an adverse employment action."

Additionally, the policy requires, "All Broward employees, volunteers, and contractors are required to report any expressed threat(s) or behavior(s) that may represent a threat to the community, school, or any individual."

Staff has been trained that anyone can call a Code Red and how, at their specific location, they can call a Code Red. And we practice our Code Red drills every month as per statute. During the 2018/19 school year, schools conducted 2,350 Code Red drills. We will begin conducting Code Red drills again in our schools this week.

All of these trainings are intended to develop the capacity of individuals, and the community, to respond in an emergency situation that will never match the exact conditions of the training. Every emergency is unique. Our effort is to educate people on how to think in an emergency based on the unique conditions they find themselves in during the emergency. Even at one school, people in different locations may need to act in different ways, depending on the nature of the crisis and source of the threat. This is called **situational awareness** and is what Broward County Public Schools is cultivating with our safety and security initiatives.

There are some issues on which progress has been made, but completion has not yet occurred. One of the commitments I made to you in November was to initiate **investigations into the actions of BCPS personnel** who were present during the tragedy. Shortly after receiving this Commission's investigatory materials, just days after my November testimony, I

directed that four staff members be reassigned, and investigations commence. We contracted with an external firm to conduct these investigations.

Two of these investigations are complete and have been provided to the affected individuals for their 30-day review, in accordance with District policy. Two more will move to this stage in the coming weeks.

In March, based on this Commission's interim report, I directed that the principal at the time also be investigated. That investigation will also be completed in the coming weeks and ultimately referred to the Professional Standard's Committee (PSC). Our intention is to get this investigation process correct - for the best interests of the community and for the individuals under investigation. Being thorough, respecting due process, and determining final outcomes has taken more time than any of us would have liked. But we chose to take the time to get it right.

I want to update you on some **changes in leadership** we have made at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The 2019 Florida Principal of Year – Ms. **Michelle Kefford** – has assumed the leadership role of principal this past July. In addition, I have made changes in the administrative and security teams at the school.

We have an exceptional educator in Ms. Kefford. She is a Parkland resident and former biology teacher at MSD. She is receiving all necessary support to respond, recover, and heal while ensuring that the academic excellence that characterizes MSD continues moving forward.

The focus on having sufficient trained personnel, strong policy and procedural guidance, and monitoring and accountability systems are not the only domains where we have taken action. There are a number of ways in which we are also leveraging technology to meet our needs.

I committed to you that BCPS staff would remove the **school bus radios off of public safety channels** by the start of the 2019/20 school year. I want to remind you that on September 5, 2018, the School Board of Broward County approved \$4.5 million in capital funding to initiate a radio system migration and enhancement project. This project included two distinct work streams. The first phase of the project included the migration of the District's bus and other non-emergency radio traffic off of Broward County's existing public safety radio system and on to the newly developed local government radio system. We completed this migration prior to the deadline.

Additional key milestones in this project included the purchase, programming and installation of new radios for 1,367 school buses, four dispatch control stations, 14 fleet maintenance vehicles, and 314 two-way handheld portable radios in our schools. We are

ensuring that there are multiple communication methods, including sufficient radios and radio coverage, available to our school personnel.

We are moving to install **new intercom and communication systems**. In September 2018, the School Board approved allocating \$17 million to upgrade the intercom systems at all high schools, technical colleges, centers, and secondary combination schools. This project will improve the emergency communications within schools. It will upgrade the intercom system to a digital platform, allowing school administration to pre-record emergency messages and initiate them remotely; and incorporate additional speakers throughout the campuses, particularly in common areas outside of buildings. The District identified a business partner to accomplish this work in April 2019, and initial roll-out of the upgrades has begun.

Additionally, the District has funded approximately **2,500 additional analytic cameras** to expand coverage and enhance active detection.

The technology, the policies, the staffing, the training – the entire enterprise of safety and security must work as an integrated whole within Broward County Schools and with our partners in law enforcement and community agencies. All of us need to maintain situational awareness – to know how to respond in particular circumstances – through learning, training, and repeated practice. Additionally, we are in the process of examining the language which we use to define our security status codes. We have heard from local and national experts that using color codes is not as effective as “plain language.” This will be a significant change and we will not undertake it lightly. We are ensuring that all of our community knows what to do using our current protocols before moving towards Situational Awareness, Options Based Responses, and Simple Language.

This has not been a comprehensive list of all actions by BCPS - or our partners in law enforcement, community health services, or other governmental agencies - because there is not enough time to do so today.

There have been many actions beyond safety and security that we have undertaken. These include the operation of our Wellness Center in Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the operation of the Broward County Resiliency Center in the City of Parkland, our partnership with the National Center for Crisis and Bereavement to serve victims, their families, and the Parkland/Coral Springs community, our partnership with the Center for Mind-Body Medicine to build resiliency through comprehensive wellness, and our deepening partnerships with local community mental health providers. **These, and other initiatives, have been important parts or our holistic response, recovery, and resiliency efforts.**

I stand ready to provide the Commission with any further detail on items I referenced today or items that arise during our dialogue.

All of this work is about changing the culture of school operations. Safety and security must be successfully addressed in order to enable great instruction. And safety and security are the responsibility of all school community members. While much has been done, we must continue to learn, adapt and improve.

Broward County Public Schools is committed to providing a world class education in a safe and secure learning environment. Thank you for inviting me to update you on our work in Broward County Public Schools.

Chair, I welcome this dialogue with you and the other Commission members.