

The Macomb Daily

CV tele-town hall reveals parent security concerns



Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts said the district will continue conversations on school safety into the fall. Photo courtesy of CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS

By Nicole Tuttle, For **The Macomb Daily**

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High schools in the Chippewa Valley Schools district, such as Dakota, will need further study to determine methods of making them more secure. Nicole Tuttle — For The Macomb Daily

A top security measure that families want to see taken in schools is more outside entry barriers, according to a recent tele-town hall hosted by Chippewa Valley Schools.

The Clinton Township-based district hosted a tele-town hall on June 19 to obtain public input on school safety. District families that had their phone numbers on file with Chippewa Valley Schools received a phone call asking them to participate.

“Keeping students safe has never been more important. We know our parents and community members are busy and have limited time to attend school meetings,” Diane Blain, director of community relations, said. “We wanted to try something different that would reach them in the comfort of their own homes to discuss this very important issue.”

Officials discussed school security and answered questions during the tele-town event.

Speakers included Superintendent Ron Roberts, Wakely Associates Inc. Vice President Brian Smilnak, school board President Beth Pyden and Macomb County Sheriff Anthony Wickersham.

More than 1,000 people participated, according to Blain.

“Most of the questions pertained to how we handle and respond to school threats at Chippewa Valley Schools,” Blain said. “Several folks inquired about our counseling services and support services to address mental health challenges.”

Respondents also asked about how the district monitors social media and how it responds to threats, Blain said. She also said the tele-town hall served as a reminder to families that the district won’t tolerate threats, harassment, bullying and intimidation either in district buildings or on social media.

“We used the tele-town hall format to remind parents and community members that they should talk to their children about using words and social media appropriately,” Blain said.

Respondents were polled on a series of questions, including:

- “How would you rate safety at Chippewa Valley Schools?” 83 of the 160 respondents rated the district as “somewhat safe.”
- “Which of the following security enhancements would you most like to see?” 68 of the 162 respondents chose “more outside entry barriers.”

On May 7, the school board received a presentation on school security from Smilnak of the Warren-based architectural firm Wakely Associates.

The presentation was given in response to the district’s request for a security analysis of its buildings.

Smilnak said Wakely began to examine the district’s buildings in April. He went to say the district is well prepared in the area of restricting entry to buildings, so discussions for improvements have focused more on limiting access within buildings, particularly door lockdowns.

The high schools are of particular concern, since they have students coming and going throughout the day, and more studies are being done to help determine the best methods of creating new barriers to unwanted individuals, according to Smilnak.

Roberts, the superintendent, said the district will continue conversations on school safety this summer and into the fall. The district is also planning to conduct in-person town hall meetings on school safety, however dates and locations have not yet been confirmed.