

DUBOIS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of the Superintendent

Timothy A. Deluccia

**500 Liberty Boulevard
DuBois, PA 15801-2410**

**Phone: 814-371-2700
Fax: 814-371-2544**

I would like to thank Senators Baker, Folmer and Scarnati and other members of the Senate Education & Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees for the opportunity to address the issue of safety in our schools.

I am Tim Deluccia, Superintendent of the DuBois Area School District. This is my fifth year as superintendent and my eighteenth year as a school administrator. DuBois Area School District is located in Clearfield and Jefferson counties, encompassing 258 square miles. There are 10 schools in the district serving approximately 4000 students.

While school safety has always been a priority among all of us, the horrible incident in Newtown, Connecticut has not only heightened the awareness of school safety among students, parents, educators and community and school and government leaders; but it also has school boards and administration assessing the safety of our schools and coming to conclusions about what it is that we are doing that is on target and what it is that we need to do differently.

We have been fortunate to have School Resource Officers or SRO's in our High School and Middle School. Grant funding through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency was the funding source for the development of the SRO program in 1999. As funding was eliminated, our school board and administration continued to recognize the importance of this program and remained committed to supporting the SRO's in our schools by allocating district funds year after year. We are currently the only school district in our two-county area to have the SRO program. There are many positive outcomes from having School Resource Officers in our buildings. Not only are they the police officer but they are members of our school families. They nurture a positive

culture with our students in the classroom, hallways, cafeteria and stadium. They promote student safety through drug and alcohol education. They use their expertise in the mathematics classroom to educate students on measuring the distance of tire skid marks after traveling at a certain speed. One of our SRO's brings many a tear to our seniors at graduation as he sings Kenny Chesney's song "Don't Blink". I believe in the SRO program and value its importance in our district. I would welcome the opportunity to expand the program to our elementary schools, especially those schools located in the rural parts of our district.

When addressing school building safety, areas of consideration include the design of the building and the technology needed to support school safety. Recent renovation projects have focused on school safety through building design changes and relocating offices. Other considerations have included updating locking mechanisms on doors in the classrooms and outside entrances. However, there are other buildings that were constructed and designed in the 1970's that have office areas located in a section of the building that make it difficult for school office staff to positively identify the individuals entering the building. In addition, some of the classrooms were constructed without doors and with portable walls between the rooms as part of the "open classroom" concept. This has been addressed where possible but still remains a concern in some buildings today.

The technology required in the buildings to support school safety is also an area of focus. In our district, the board committed nearly \$500,000 to a state-of-the-art security camera system throughout our middle school and high school facilities. In the elementary buildings, security camera systems are up-to-date where renovations projects have taken place and antiquated and need to be upgraded in other elementary buildings. Through grants obtained by our School Resource Officers and additional local funds, the district utilizes a software program called V-Soft at the secondary level. V-Soft is a web based program that utilizes databases to track visitors to our schools and provide alerts such as sex offenders through the swipe of a driver's license. Unfortunately, the elementary schools do not have this technology.

Our schools provide wonderful learning opportunities for our children. We are here today because we recognize that keeping them safe is of the utmost importance. I welcome anyone the opportunity to visit our district and see first hand the things that DuBois Area School District is doing to make our schools safer for our students. Thank you.

Tim Deluccia

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Superintendent