

Portable Safety

In June 2022, a man entered a Seattle elementary school campus, entered a portable, and assaulted 2 children/students. Please see the following article for more details: <https://komonews.com/news/local/man-arrested-after-trying-to-get-into-seattle-elementary-school-assaulting-truck-driver>. **Now, please think about our current school environments and portable set ups, and contemplate the outcome of this scenario, or any similar scenario, if it were to occur in Tahoma School District (TSD) schools with portables.** This man (or any like intruder) would be able to very easily walk into TSD portables and harm the students, teachers, and staff inside, as many of our portables remain UNLOCKED during school hours.

Current Situation

- As of the end of the recent school year, there was **no standard, protocol, or policy** that required all portable doors to be locked.
- Some principals, only recently towards the end of last school year after the 5/30/22 online threat to TSD, decided to lock some portables, but other **portable doors remained unlocked.**
- Portable doors have **NO key pad entry.** This means, teachers are more prone to leave portables unlocked for easier access for students and staff going to and from the portable. If the portable is locked, a student who has to use the restroom or leave the portable for any reason (going to the office, nurses room, etc.) has to knock and wait for the teacher (who cannot see who it is) to open the door, disrupting the teaching and learning. Some students have expressed they even choose to withhold going to the bathroom for this reason.
- Current portable doors **do not provide a way for teachers to view** who is at the door. The district stated that it was getting bids for doors with large windows. However, UNLESS these windows are bullet/shatter proof, this would actually make our students/staff LESS safe and is NOT a viable option.
- Per TSD School Board Policy 3203, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, “The Tahoma School District believes that our schools must be [...] safe [...] for every student and every adult [...] to ensure] all students have what they need to learn and thrive.” Currently, in respect to the safety and security of school campuses the **Tahoma School District is in violation of policy 3203**, as only some portable buildings are locked, leaving those in unlocked buildings at a disadvantage in an unsafe and insecure environment.

Changes Needed

1. Create a policy and protocol that **requires ALL portable doors in the district to be locked at ALL times** during school hours. This should not be a decision at the discretion of a principal, teacher, or staff member; nor should it ever be allowed to be discontinued or paused.
2. All portable doors need to have a **key pad/card entry system.**
3. Portable doors **need to have a way for teachers/staff to view** who is at the door. If this is a window, the window needs to be bullet/shatter proof. A peep hole or a device much like a video doorbell could also achieve this goal.

Why These Changes Need To Happen

- Locking doors **provides a safe environment** for all- children, teachers, and staff and creates an equitable safe environment for all. Children will be able to experience **enhanced learning** if they feel safe. Likewise, teachers can focus more on teaching. Unlocked doors leave students, teachers, and staff vulnerable and unprotected. Unlocked doors create an inequitable experience, as students, teachers, and staff in unlocked portables are not provided the same secure learning environment as students inside a locked building.
- **Key card entry** for all portable buildings provides a **SAFE and secure** way for teachers, staff, and children to safely exit and enter the portable building. A key card classroom pass **eliminates the safety risk of**

children/students as young as 5 years old **waiting unattended outside** the portable door, knocking and requesting access back to their classroom. (Every grade at Rock Creek Elementary School utilizes a portable, as the STEM room is located in a portable.) A key card entry **eliminates the constant classroom and learning disruption** for teachers and students, as teachers would not have to stop teaching to unlock the door and students would not be disrupted by continual knocking throughout the day after a student returns from the restroom or other area outside of the portable. A key card entry system **eliminates the health risk** of students withholding going to the bathroom, as it allows students to feel comfortable and safe, knowing that they can easily return into their classroom without fear of being locked out and/or a distraction to class. A key card entry system **eliminates the safety risk of teachers propping doors open and/or leaving them unlocked** for convenience of not having to physically open the door when a student or other staff member knocks requesting entry.

- Per **TSD School Board Policy 3203**, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, “The Tahoma School District believes that our schools must be [...] safe [...] for every student and every adult [...] to ensure] all students have what they need to learn and thrive.” Providing key pad entries for all portables, requiring all portables to be locked at all times during school hours, and providing a safe way for teachers to view outside the portable door (shatter/bullet proof glass, peep hole, or video system) **ensures equity for all students to be provided a fully locked, safe and secure environment to learn.**
- Per **TSD School Board Policy 4311**, School Board School Safety and Security Services Program, “The purpose of the Tahoma School District safety and security services program is to improve school safety and the educational climate at the school.[...] and help] to promote a safe, inclusive and positive learning environment.” The Safety Committee then has the **responsibility and obligation to identify, discuss, and approve** to submit the requests for necessary updated changes needed to provide the safest environment possible in an evolving climate where school violence is increasing at an alarming rate. Likewise, the Tahoma School Board has the **responsibility and obligation to approve the necessary changes** and updates needed to provide the crucial foundational safety layers at our school buildings and campuses.
- **TSD has the budget for these critical and necessary one-time investments** increasing the safety of each and every student, such as \$5,000 per key pad entry to a portable door and the cost of installing locked buzz entry at the elementary and middle schools. **Our students’ lives are priceless and worth these one-time investments.** TSD received **over \$16,000 per enrolled student** for the 2021-2022 school year. At the end of 2021-2022 school year, the TSD had **over \$24 million dollars in its general unassigned fund balance.** The **Associated Student Body Fund had over \$1.8 million allotted** for the 2021-2022 year, and will likely have similar for the upcoming budget. With the dramatic housing price increases, the district can also expect to have an **increased general funds budget** through the funds provided by local property taxes alone. (source: <https://www.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/school-apportionment/safs-report-api>)
- Approving and implementing critical and necessary safety features will **help to retain valuable educators and maintain a full staff.** Failing to implement these crucial safety layers can result in the loss of experienced staff and educators and staffing shortages, as educators and staff leave their jobs due to feeling unsafe with inadequate safety measures in place. Likewise, implementing these critical and necessary safety features will **help to maintain and increase student enrollment**, as students and parents will feel safe sending their children to school. Failing to implement these crucial safety layers will result in a decline in student enrollment, as parents and students realize the district is inadequately addressing the safety needs of today’s schools and will pursue safer education options elsewhere outside the district.

Supporting Evidence

- The safety needs for today’s schools have evolved. United States **school shootings reached a 20 year high** in 2021 with 93 school shootings, which was surpassed again in 2022 with 95 shootings occurring on school grounds. (sources: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/29/us/texas-iowa-school-safety-funding/index.html> ; <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/gunfire-on-school-grounds/>). The CNN article also clearly states that school shootings are happening more across ALL grade levels, as “fewer than half of schools that had shootings

were high schools.” This means that our **elementary and middle schools have increasingly become targets** of violence.

- Here in WA, **high capacity magazine sales peaked with record sales** during June, including locally, for example in Covington. (sources: <https://komonews.com/news/local/gun-owners-load-up-on-high-capacity-magazines-make-record-purchases-before-wa-ban-starts> and <https://komonews.com/news/local/gun-stores-seeing-record-sales-as-washington-state-prepares-to-enact-new-gun-laws>)
- The TSD has received **safety threats specific to gun violence**, and even specifically targeting an elementary school during the 2021-2022 school year. Regarding the 3/17/22 gun violence school shooting threat to Rock Creek Elementary, in a verbal conversation, Maple Valley Police Department Chief Collins stated that the perpetrator’s threats were deemed non-credible “at the time”, but that did not exclude the possibility that any future threats from this local perpetrator could be credible at a later time.
- Locally, Maple Valley Police Department on several occasions has alerted the public of **increasing crime in our community**, providing instruction to the public on how to prevent crimes of opportunity (i.e. always locking doors to cars and homes, leaving porch lights on). The department even states that “the lack of precautions equal crimes of opportunity”. (source: Maple Valley Police Department Facebook posts dated May 24, 2022 and June 29, 2022)