

Safety and Security

Some teachers and citizens of Walla Walla Public Schools have expressed concerns about the safety and security of the two high schools. These concerns have centered on the campus style arrangement of buildings at Walla Walla High School and the multi-story building for Lincoln Alternative High School. A subcommittee of the Facilities Task Force reviewed school safety and security at these two sites based on (1) the facility conditions and (2) the actions being taken to alleviate any risks. As part of the review, the subcommittee interviewed the principals and law enforcement personnel.

At Walla Walla High School, there are currently four major entries and exits. In addition, there are over 125 doors that must be secured. The school needs an improved parent and bus drop-off area. At Lincoln Alternative High School fencing is a problem. In some areas, the fencing prevents paramedic access close to the building and in other areas there needs to be additional fencing and gates for security. There are multiple entry points into the building and poor separation of traffic and play areas. The older design of Lincoln presents stairwells and small, winding hallways that are difficult to supervise. Both schools have portable classrooms which pose additional security risks.

Both schools have taken steps to improve safety and security. To improve sight lines at Walla Walla High School, the “locker bays” have been removed and the trees and bushes have been trimmed for better sight lines. A dress code has been implemented, too. Both schools have security officers and security cameras. Two of the most important aspects of the District’s safety and security program are the level of involvement by the school leaders and the development of crisis contingency plans.

Both schools have challenges in monitoring multiple entrances and traffic patterns. Although fewer buildings and fewer entrances have many positive aspects, they also may create bottlenecks in student pedestrian traffic. In summary, the subcommittee has concluded that despite some problem areas, the District has an active and effective safety and security program. Renovating the two high schools for safety and security reasons alone would probably would not merit the expense. Of course, if renovation is advantageous for other reasons, the safety and security features of both buildings could be improved.