

SAFER SPACES

In an effort to reduce the risk of harm to students, staff and visitors, this policy mandates all schools to establish and maintain the availability when physically permissible of Safer Spaces (also commonly referred to as HARD CORNERS) in District classrooms and other locations where students, staff and visitors convene. The designation of these Safer Spaces is intended to reduce the likelihood that students or staff will be harmed in an act of violence. For purposes of this policy, a Safer Space is a designated general location where students and staff can more effectively position themselves in a manner where they are not visible from a hallway or outside door or window. Safer Spaces are NOT intended to suggest a specific level of security or absolute safety of students, staff and visitors in all emergency situations and are closely associated with the construction of the building. Additionally, Safer Spaces are NOT intended to convey specific levels of ballistic or blast protection. With the great variation of classrooms and other instructional areas with more than one door and/or window, the Safer Spaces may be a different location in the classroom or area due to the location of the perceived location of the threat(s).

1. All classroom doors must be locked at all times. All staff must refrain from using objects to “prop” doors open during instructional time.
2. The Chief of Safety, Security, and Emergency Preparedness shall develop and communicate general guidelines for the identification and marking of Safer Spaces for District schools. The Chief Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Officer will evaluate and update the District’s guideline on an annual basis for the identification of and designation of Safer Spaces on an annual basis. These guidelines could include sample diagrams, additional written instructions, videos or web courses based on the expertise of the Chief Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Officer. These guidelines will also be available to staff through their incorporation within the District’s emergency preparedness manuals.
3. School administration shall work with the appropriate individuals to identify Safer Spaces in each classroom or other District locations where students, staff, and visitors convene in the event of an emergency lockdown (also referred to as a Code Red Lockdown). Those appropriate individuals must consider any additional space needed for students that utilize wheelchairs. These individuals may include the School Resource Officers (SRO) and other first responders as available and members of the school’s SAFE Team.

4. Once identified, the Safer Spaces will be marked with standardized visual designators as specified by the District based on statistical likelihood of a threat.
5. In a similar manner required by fire code for emergency egress routes, employees will be required to keep Safer Spaces clear of items and objects that could interfere with their use as shelter spaces in an emergency.
6. This policy serves as a general guideline for an approach focused to reduce the risk of harm in an act of violence outside of the classroom or area. Nothing in this policy will be interpreted as requiring employees, students or visitors to use the designated Safer Spaces if what they see or hear during an emergency indicates that it would be less safe to follow this policy.
7. School administration shall conduct and document quarterly checks of Safer Spaces to ensure the spaces are free of items and objects that could block these areas. These inspections should be conducted during lockdown drills and documented as part of the drill documentation process. When possible, the SRO shall be included in the process. If these inspections of the Safer Spaces are not clear of debris or moveable obstructions, in accordance with this policy, the Principal shall take appropriate corrective action to immediately address the problem.
8. In addition to the efforts of each school administrative staff to demonstrate the importance of and to measure compliance with this policy, the Chief Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Officer shall establish and maintain a separate compliance approach where security supervisors and/or members of the Office of Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness will be tasked to conduct unannounced inspections and to document compliance at schools. The results of these inspections will be provided to and maintained by the Chief Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Officer or their designee and shared with the School Board annually. These inspections shall be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with instruction or testing. If the Chief Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Officer or their designee becomes aware of employees who have not kept the Safer Space clear of debris, they shall notify the Principal to take appropriate corrective action.
9. All employees are expected to report concerns regarding adherence/compliance to their Supervisor. The Principal or Administrator is responsible to report all concerns to the Chief Safety, Security, and Emergency Preparedness Officer.

10. School administration shall identify specific individuals to assist all individuals with disabilities who are not able to ambulate are moved to a designated safe area. This should be included in all school's safety plans.

AUTHORITY: 1001.41, Fla. Stat.

HISTORY: