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**A Message From Rose Albanese-DePinto, Senior Counselor to the Chancellor**

Dear Colleagues,

The recent tragic events at schools in the United States and Canada involving gun violence serve as reminders of the need to continue our efforts to assure that our schools are safe and secure. As every principal well knows, each school's School Safety Plan addresses the safety and security needs of the school and includes daily safety procedures as well as those protocols and procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency. Principals must convene their School Safety Committee to gather input from key constituents, review the previous year's plan, and set the committee's monthly meetings calendar. Annual updates to a school's School Safety Plan must be approved by both the Department of Education and NYPD as part of the on-going collaboration between the two agencies charged with safety and security in the NYC public schools.

**Promoting a Safe and Secure Learning Environment** - A team approach to safety and security facilitated by the principal that brings together the complementary skills of all staff and the resources of the entire school promotes a safe and secure learning environment. An integral component of a team approach is the scheduling and charting of the daily deployment of School Safety Agents, deans and other school personnel assigned to security. Post assignments, perimeter patrols and hall sweeps must be planned, disseminated to key staff and reviewed on a daily basis by the principal(s) and the SSA Level III at AM and PM meetings.

**Visitor Control Procedures** – These procedures are detailed in the School Safety Plan, enable each school to monitor who is given access to the school. The point of entry is the first, best place to reduce the likelihood of an unwanted person and/or weapon from entering a school building.

**Regular Comprehensive Building Assessments and Patrols** – Schools must continue to conduct regular assessments of the school building to ensure that all doors and windows properly close and lock and that any safety related issues are addressed if and when they are identified. Regular random perimeter patrols should continue to be scheduled to monitor the immediate vicinity of the school for safety and security related concerns.

**Emergency Communications** – In addition to regular phone lines, all schools are equipped with multiple means of communication, including hand held radios, computers and, in some instances, Blackberry wireless devices which allow both phone calls and text messaging. The use of communication devices in the event of an emergency should be addressed in the School Safety Plan.

**Evacuation and Shelter-in-Place Drills** –Besides conducting required fire drills, all schools should periodically practice sheltering-in and locking down the school building. The drills should include assuring the safety of students that may be outside the school during entry, dismissal, physical education classes, and special events. These procedures are included in the School Safety Plan.

The Department of Education, the NYC Police Department and all members of each school community must continue their vigilance as we work together each day to provide New York City's public school children with safe and secure schools.

Sincerely,

Rose Albanese-DePinto  
Senior Counselor to the Chancellor for School Intervention and Development