



Gwinnett County Government Communications Division NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTY PARTNERS WITH SCHOOLS TO UPGRADE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

(Lawrenceville, Ga., Oct. 23, 2013) – The Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners, in partnership with the Gwinnett County Board of Education and Buford City Schools, announced they would use public safety funds from the 2014 SPLOST program to upgrade the public safety emergency notification system for public schools in the county. The proposed system would eliminate the need to place a 911 call in an emergency. Instead, an automatic alert system would send a signal directly to the Gwinnett County 911 Center at the push of a button.

The system also incorporates cameras at each school. When the emergency alert system is activated by a school, live feed from the cameras at that school would be automatically sent to the 911 Center. The system would be installed in all public schools in the Gwinnett County School System and the Buford City School system.

"The Board of Commissioners voted at its Oct. 22 meeting to spend up to \$5 million from SPLOST funds designated for public safety if voters extend the program for three more years, said Board Chairman Charlotte Nash. "After the tragic events in schools elsewhere, I believe we must do all we can to protect the students in our public schools here in Gwinnett." The sales tax renewal is on the ballot for voters to consider during a special election on Nov. 5.

Gwinnett County Public Schools CEO/Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks expressed his appreciation for the county's support of safe schools, saying, "Safety has been and continues to be a top priority for our community when it comes to its schools. Gwinnett County Public Schools has long partnered with local law enforcement, the juvenile courts, the district attorney's office and emergency-response agencies to implement common-sense safety measures and responses to situations. The action by the Board of Commissioners is another piece of this partnership... one that will help ensure a safe learning environment for our students."

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Gwinnett's 132 schools and support facilities serve more than 169,000 students. An existing communications loop already allows Gwinnett schools to send and receive video to the school district's police department, but that system is not connected to the 911 call center.

The city of Buford operates four public schools, which would be included in the plan. Dr. Geye Hamby, superintendent of the Buford City Schools, said, "We are very excited about the new safety features and the availability to schools. Safety is a priority in all of our schools in the state and this program will enhance what many schools already have in place. We look forward to working with law enforcement with the implementation of the new devices."

Gwinnett's 911 Center is located at the Gwinnett Police headquarters annex in Lawrenceville. Dispatchers there send police and fire and emergency medical services personnel to emergency situations based on need and location.

Carole Boyce, chairman of the Gwinnett County Board of Education, said, "I applaud the Board of Commissioners for this move. Our children are our county's most precious resources and we all must work together to keep our schools safe and to ensure we are prepared to respond appropriately."

Phillip Beard, chairman of the Buford City Commission, said, "Safety of our kids is a top priority here at Buford City Schools. We're pleased to partner with Gwinnett County and Gwinnett County Public Schools in this initiative as we do with other programs.

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