

Hellgate Elementary Ten Essentials for School Safety

1. Behavioral Threat Assessments and Management

Hellgate Elementary conducts comprehensive behavioral threat assessments collaboratively with a trained team, following strict, evidence-based protocols. When a potential risk is identified, a safety plan is immediately developed and diligently implemented. Hellgate Elementary maintains a dedicated Behavioral Threat Assessment Team who is responsible for evaluating and addressing potential threats or concerning behaviors within the school community. All team members have completed specialized training through the University of Montana Safe Schools Center. Hellgate Elementary follows established district protocols and procedures to ensure that all behavioral threat assessments are conducted systematically, collaboratively, and in accordance with best practices to protect the safety and well-being of students and staff.

2. Surveys & Early Identification System (EIS)

Hellgate Elementary conducts end-of-year staff safety surveys and bi-annual Early Identification Surveys (EIS) with all students as part of a comprehensive approach to promoting school safety and early intervention. The staff safety surveys assess perceptions of campus safety and help to identify areas for improvement. In addition, the EIS is administered twice each year to all students to identify those who may be at risk or in need of additional support. Students identified through the EIS are connected with Hellgate Elementary counselors for targeted small-group interventions, and teachers are informed of relevant concerns to ensure coordinated support across all school settings. Through these proactive measures, Hellgate Elementary fosters a safe, responsive, and supportive learning environment for every student.

3. Safety Committee & Gaggle Monitoring

Hellgate Elementary maintains a Safety Committee that meets quarterly to review and identify potential gaps in campus, building, and classroom security. Identified concerns are addressed in collaboration with the Director of Facilities to ensure timely remediation and ongoing safety improvements. The district also utilizes Gaggle to monitor online student activity and provide real-time alerts to staff regarding any concerning content or behavior. In addition, staff receive cybersecurity training through KnowBe4, a district-wide platform designed to increase awareness, strengthen digital safety practices, and prevent phishing and other social engineering threats.

In addition, all school volunteers are required to complete a background check prior to volunteering in any capacity. A comprehensive list of approved volunteers is provided to all staff. If a background check is returned unsatisfactory, the Superintendent will personally contact the individual to inform them that they are not permitted to volunteer in any capacity at the school or accompany a class on any field trip.

4. Anonymous Tip Line

Hellgate Elementary provides students, staff, and families with access to an Anonymous Tip Line to report threats of violence, potential self-harm, or other safety concerns. The system allows individuals to share information confidentially at any time. The district also provides Safer MT for students, staff, and community members to utilize. This initiative encourages everyone to remain vigilant and take action by reporting any behavior or situation that may pose a risk to school safety ("see something, say something"). All reports are promptly reviewed by the administrative team and the Behavioral Threat Assessment Team to ensure appropriate follow-up, intervention, and coordination with law enforcement or mental health professionals as needed to maintain a safe and supportive school environment.

5. Law Enforcement Partnerships, E3 App & Panic Buttons

Hellgate Elementary maintains strong partnerships with local law enforcement to enhance school safety and emergency preparedness. The district utilizes the E3 app, which provides instant alerts to the SWAT team lead and local police in the event of an emergency. All staff are equipped with silent panic buttons to quickly alert law enforcement and administration of potential threats. In addition, law enforcement officers provide annual presentations to all 6th–8th grade students on topics such as vaping, social media safety, and bullying prevention to promote awareness and responsible decision-making.

6. Tri-Annual Safety Assessments

In 2023, the University of Montana Safe Schools Center conducted a comprehensive school safety assessment at Hellgate Elementary to evaluate current safety practices and identify both strengths and areas for improvement. To ensure ongoing progress and adherence to best practices, the district will continue to conduct updated safety assessments every three years, promoting continuous monitoring, refinement, and enhancement of school safety measures.

7. School Resource Officer (SRO)

Hellgate Elementary employs a full-time School Resource Officer (SRO) who is on campus Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and provides coverage at school events such as dances, athletic activities, and graduation ceremonies. The SRO works collaboratively with staff, students, and families to maintain a safe and supportive school environment while fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and the school community.

8. Mental Health Supports & Programs

Hellgate Elementary is committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of all students through a comprehensive network of school- and community-based services. The district employs eight full-time CSCT staff from Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch (YBGR) to provide intensive, Tier 3 behavioral and emotional support. YBGR services include licensed therapists and behavior specialists who offer tailored interventions for students with significant behavioral needs or trauma histories who may internalize emotions.

Hellgate Elementary also partners with Providence to employ a full-time school counselor, who delivers classroom lessons on social-emotional learning and prevention, provides one-on-one and group counseling, and supports all students throughout the school day. The counselor collaborates closely with the Risk Assessment Team to assist with de-escalation and intervention efforts.

Additional mental health and support partnerships include:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS): Began in 2024, serving seven students in its first year. Volunteers meet once per week on campus for approximately 45 minutes. The program is designed for students who are generally emotionally regulated but would benefit from additional positive attention and mentoring.
- Youth Crisis Diversion (YCD): A partnership between Youth Court, the school district, and Providence Montana to support students at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. YCD coordinates services that include parent collaboration and connection to community support.
- Partnership Health Center (PHC): Provides school-based behavioral health support and focuses on Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, including individual and group counseling.
- Roots and Resilience: Offers access to community therapists who provide on-campus counseling to remove barriers related to transportation and scheduling. While fostering Peace, Productivity, Health, and Happiness across classrooms and grade levels.

In addition to these services, all teachers implement OLWEUS anti-bullying lessons, and PAX is implemented school-wide in grades K-8 to promote self-regulation, prosocial behavior, and a positive learning environment. PAX is an evidence-based program that helps students develop skills

for attention, cooperation, and emotional control while fostering Peace, Productivity, Health, and Happiness across classrooms and grade levels.

9. Safety Drills & Post-Drill Assessments

Hellgate Elementary conducts a comprehensive schedule of emergency preparedness drills throughout the school year to ensure staff and students are equipped to respond effectively in a crisis. Lockdown drills are conducted four times per year, along with fire, earthquake, and bus evacuation drills. Following each drill, post-drill surveys are completed to evaluate procedures and identify opportunities for improvement.

The district maintains Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with various locations throughout Missoula County to serve as designated off-campus reunification sites in the event of an emergency requiring relocation. These locations have sufficient space, resources, and accessibility to support safe and efficient family reunification. In September 2025, Hellgate Elementary successfully conducted a full-scale reunification practice drill to test these procedures and strengthen coordination among staff, first responders, and community partners. The University of Montana Safe Schools Center provided reunification training, observed the practice drill, and provided feedback for improvement.

In addition, each month, Hellgate Elementary designates a monthly safety focus to ensure that student and staff safety remains a top priority. During this time, administrators lead discussions and activities with staff centered on the identified safety topic. These sessions are designed to reinforce safety protocols, address current or seasonal concerns, and promote a proactive culture of awareness and preparedness throughout the district. By consistently reviewing and practicing safety measures, Hellgate Elementary ensures that every staff member remains informed, engaged, and ready to support a safe learning environment for all.

10. Social Media Safety & Gaggle

Hellgate Elementary utilizes Gaggle to continuously monitor student online activity and identify concerning content or behaviors to ensure early intervention and student safety. The district provides annual presentations to students on the risks and responsibilities associated with social media use, promoting digital citizenship and awareness. In addition, each February, the district hosts a parent and family film screening focused on the dangers of social media, followed by discussion and resource sharing to support safe and responsible technology use at home and school.