

Preston Parents and Community

The events of last Wednesday's mass shooting have caused many of us to pause and struggle with how to respond to such tragedy. Without a doubt, the event has generated anxiety and worry. As a district we are responsible and compelled to respond to challenges to the safety and wellbeing of our educational community.

Our hearts and sincere thoughts and prayers go out to the families and community in Florida. I appreciate the staff, parents and community members' efforts to answer the deep concerns generated by these tragic events. The anger, anguish and loss that we suffer, even at a distance, is palpable as we struggle to address these circumstances.

Our job is singular in purpose; provide a safe, warm, calm and welcoming learning environment for all of our children, staff and community members. As many of you know, we routinely practice our safety procedures for fire drills, lockdowns and other emergencies. We also routinely review our policies and procedures so that we can make improvements as necessary.

A good personal and organizational safety plan has to have three fundamental components: (1) There must be a well-designed plan, (2) Our community members must be able to visualize and articulate their responsibility within the design, and (3) Our team needs to embed in our habits of work and mind a practice of situational awareness. Paying attention to details matters. As always, the focus will remain on the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff.

A brief update from Wednesday, February 14, 2018 until now: (1) Principals communicated with their staff and reminded them of the various strategies we use in the district. (2) PPMS held a previously planned lockdown drill on Thursday that went smoothly. (3) The superintendent's office issued a statement regarding the matter to staff. (4) Citizens expressed concern and volunteered various ideas to improve our safety practices. (5) We have reached out to our resident trooper and, through principals, other community members, for their input and guidance.

Your principals are the source of leadership and immediate direction on any emergency circumstances. If you have suggestions on improving any process, procedure or physical circumstance do not hesitate to share your thinking with your building leader. Also, please monitor children closely, especially our youngest charges, they can pick up on adult anxiety and worry and may internalize their own worry. We have an excellent staff of support for our children so please refer any concerns to them.

As always, I thank you for everything you do every day in the name of our students. Keep the lines of communication open.

A reason for hope is the students in Florida and around the nation. The words and actions of the high school students in Florida are amazing, moving, articulate, and powerful. As a student in the late sixties and early seventies, this feels to me like a movement that is about to change our culture. We must protect these children and our own and allow their voices to stay true and be heard.

We, in Preston, love and care for our children and the community. As a community we have acted in the past. After Sandy Hook we installed cameras and took other steps to assure our children's and staffs safety. We will continue to remain vigilant and enact the best strategies available to our team.

Remember the Palm - the face of a loved one you hold in the palm of your hand. All decisions are made with that loved one in mind. Listen to our children. Allow them time to express their worries and observations about this issue. As parents, you know your children best so watch for too much worry or media information coming through their phones and TV. Be with them and trust the future that they are building. We are here if you need us.