

# MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT – SAFETY FIRST AND ALWAYS

*(reprinted from the March/April 2017 Superintendent's Newsletter)*

Every day, 12,000 teenagers enter our care and their safety is our first responsibility and priority. We can best accomplish this duty by working together and sharing information. I want to highlight key factors to assist our shared partnership and priority surrounding the safety of our students and staff members.

*Contact School Personnel:* The best way to prevent potential danger is to contact a school staff member as soon as a concern may arise. We have administrators, counselors, teachers and police officers in our schools who will respond to any report of potential harm or past action. We strongly encourage and depend on students, parents and staff members to express their concerns directly.

*Anonymous Tip-Line:* Each student's iPad and all our websites include an easy link for anyone to report any concern. Information submitted on the tip-line goes immediately to multiple school personnel who can initiate a response or investigation.

*Impact of Social Media:* Communication in today's world is everywhere, and its distribution is simultaneous to large numbers of people. Unknowingly, people sometimes post inaccurate information about an alleged incident that may or may not have occurred. Posting inaccurate information can have an overall negative effect by creating unnecessary fear or misdirecting our efforts to investigate or intervene. Before posting anything that you do not know to be certain, we encourage you to contact our school personnel directly or to submit your concerns on the tip-line.

*Safety Drills:* We conduct safety drills to prepare students and staff members to respond safely to a variety of scenarios. In addition to multiple fire drills and a bus evacuation drill, today's world also requires us to conduct "lockdown drills." Two times each year, local police departments assist us in training students and staff members how to respond to a perpetrator intent on causing harm inside our school buildings. In close collaboration with the police, we continually review and improve best practices following each drill.

*Controlled Entry:* We limit access to our school buildings to a single entryway during the school day. Each visitor, vendor and contractor entering our schools is reviewed via a state-wide database. We appreciate your patience and understanding associated with this check-in procedure.

Our schools are wonderful, supportive environments encouraging truly extraordinary opportunities. To help assure safety for all, we will always be stronger when we work together.

Daniel E. Cates  
Superintendent