



CHARLESTON

C U S D N U M B E R O N E

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Dear Charleston School Community:

Recent news reports have served as another reminder of the painful reality that no school district or public place can ever be completely immune from senseless violence. While we express sorrow for those affected by armed violence in schools, our thoughts naturally turn to our own children and our own schools. I want to reassure you that the safety and security of students, staff and visitors has been and will remain a top priority in Charleston CUSD #1. While we cannot share every detail about our security measures currently in place, I want to share some of the strategies we employ that are aimed at continually strengthening school safety and security, especially as our summer school session is soon to begin.

- **Emergency Operations Plans and Drills.** All of our schools have emergency operations plans that, while not publicly posted or shared on our websites, are reviewed annually with local first responders. Within these plans are required drills (e.g., fire, disaster, intruder) that are completed multiple times per year. We use the A.L.I.C.E. ('run-hide-fight') system as our intruder response, which provides for options based upon the specific situation.
- **School Safety and Equipment.** We have limited, controlled entrances at all schools. School visitors must use the front door once school starts in the morning. Other doors are closed and locked during the school day. Surveillance cameras are installed in and around our schools, and we continue to add or move cameras to ensure best coverage of our facilities. Panic buttons are strategically placed in our buildings for staff to alert first responders of an emergency. Electronic messaging is used to communicate as quickly and clearly as possible with school community stakeholders.
- **Social Media and Threats.** School settings are sometimes subjected to threats on social media or from rumors in schools. Taking all threats seriously, we conduct threats assessments, alert law enforcement, and participate in investigations to determine credibility. Aligned with our internet safety curriculum, students are reminded to "think before you post" on social media. It is also important to "say something, if you see something," as we are all in this together. Students making threats of violence will face disciplinary action and may face criminal charges.
- **Gun-Free Zones.** By law, schools are gun-free zones, which means that, except for law enforcement officers, it is against the law to carry guns on school grounds or into our schools. District policy also prohibits firearms and firearm 'look alike' in or around schools or school activities. Especially with high tension levels at this time, even bringing items that look like a gun or other weapon to school is completely ill-advised.
- **Student Mental Health and Well-Being.** District staff members are concerned about the well-being of every student in our schools. We encourage students to become involved in school every day, and we strive for them to have a positive, healthy connection with someone either inside or outside of the classroom. This connection could be a fellow student or a teacher, paraprofessional, secretary, coach, administrator, custodian, etc. Anyone who works in our schools should be viewed by students as an educator and role model for them. In addition, social workers, school counselors, school psychologists and administrators are available to work with students who appear to be in need of specialized care. If you are a student or you know a student who needs assistance, please contact one of our school principals.

We do not want ANY student or adult to be afraid to come to school, attend school events or feel a sense of fear anywhere. All of us in the Charleston School Community can play a vital role in staying vigilant, being aware, and reporting any concerns to building principals, the district office and/or local law enforcement. We know that you share in our concern and our focus on safety and security.

Yours in Education,
Todd J. Vilardo, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

LEARNING AND LEADING EVERY DAY