

Clearfield Area School District

Administrative Offices
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February 19, 2018

Open Letter to Our Parents and Community

Dear Parents and Community,

Last week's tragedy in Florida, and others like it, whether at a school or a public gathering always raise concerns about the efforts of the school district in regards to school and student safety. Before I start sharing below some of the things we have done and put into place, please know, we know that it can never be enough if a life is lost.

The school district has trained our staff in ALICE. ALICE is an acronym for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate. ALICE was a training and change in approach to what was traditionally the old format of lock down and hide in your classroom. That may be appropriate for some situations, but in other cases, it may be better to evacuate when you can. The training also goes into the process of barricading rooms and preparing to respond if the room would be breached. There is additional training scheduled for this summer that "trains the trainer", who will then come back and re-train our staff. It is evident though from communications today, that not all teachers have shared what should be done in their classrooms if a situation arose. This is something that needs to be done and will be done in an appropriate manner across the grade levels.

In addition this past fall we had our teaching staff work through a number of emergency situations that could include everything from an intruder format, to a natural disaster concern, or a building related issue that creates danger and panic. We made it more challenging by eliminating the administrators from the solutions. Our goal was for our teachers to problem solve what they needed to do in a time of crisis and what they were going to do to help protect the students. That type of exercise is intended to create more questions and thoughts, than scripted solutions. Every event will unfold differently, and our goal is to not have a memorized response to every scenario that could change, but to have the tools to react as necessary. In that aspect every classroom should have an Emergency Management Guide available in the room to help guide the process in a large number of scenarios.

Another concern that many have shared is the reunification process. "How are we going to get our kids?" If we can stay on site, pending safety and emergency management's direction, then arrangements would be made to either bus home, or to have parents come to the site to pick up. In the worst case scenarios, the school sites would probably be locked down and restricted to public access. Those situations would have us moving students to one of our alternate locations, and then establishing the process of returning children to their parents. Those directions would be made known via phone calls, e-mails, text, web site, social media and the radio and TV as needed. We will get the information to you. Do we know where the students would be going in case of emergency? We do, and it varies for the

situation and the event. In an effort to keep our alternate sites safe in time of need, we do not readily make that information public.

In the days ahead, and like many before, time will be spent on what can we improve and do better in regards to safeguarding our children. Do we know those answers now? We don't. Will what we do be enough? It depends on what someone comes up with next. We would encourage you to have those conversations with your child. What would they do in an emergency? How would they respond? We cannot create a plan for every scenario, but it is possible to create some basic understandings.

The national stage will continue to debate all kinds of topics, but in the end, we need to watch out for all children. Not only ours, but the ones that make up our community. Are there concerns that no one seems to be doing something about? Is the child left alone or ignored by family, peers, and neighbors? We probably all need to do a better job of helping the next generation grow. Until we are alert to our kids and their concerns, while being an active part of their lives, challenges will remain. Please feel free to contact us with any concerns.

Sincerely,

Mr. Terry W. Struble, Superintendent, and on behalf of the Board, Mr. Larry Putt, Board President