

Dear Families,

Around 10:45 am a furnace in the high school gym exploded. The fire alarms sounded approximately three seconds after the loud noise. The middle school students were in the gym doing their fun activities and witnessed the explosion. Their teachers and paras were with them and quickly evacuated the gym to keep the children safe.

The high school students were in classrooms watching movies when the fire alarm went off. They left the building with teachers. While they were outside, the Pretty Prairie Fire Department was on the scene quickly. **They assessed the situation and found that the reason for the explosion was a build-up of gas in the furnace unit.** The gas to the gym was shut off and the gas company has been on campus since 11:50am. **They have identified a 4 cubic feet per hour leak to be the cause of the gas build up in the furnace unit which triggered the explosion.**

Once the buildings were declared safe, high school students went back to classrooms. I met with middle school students and staff outside their building. Emotions were high for some of the kids due to the connection between the booming noise in the gym and the email sent last night. Their emotions were real- they were scared and crying... I felt the same way...we talked and let them know that the fire department had been here to check things, we knew what had happened and things were safe. The middle school teachers and support staff kept the middle school kids busy, kept them moving, and kept them emotionally stable.

Since we could not serve lunch in the cafeteria due to the investigation, in a matter of minutes, staff had the students' entire meal transported to the middle school gym and fed the kids there. The high schoolers enjoyed their pot-luck in the middle school gym, too!

We are grateful for your calm responses today and for all the offers to help us out. I cannot express enough gratitude to the firefighters and EMS of Pretty Prairie who came right out to help us. And our students and staff handled each phase of the day with dignity. At the end of the day, kids and staff are safe- some a little more emotionally drained than others- but everyone has had plenty of sugar and presents! I know everyone is ready for a break. Have a safe and enjoyable Christmas!