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Dear Parents and/or Guardians:

An increase in school threats in recent months prompts me to share our district's approach to dealing with them. The primary focus, of course, is student and staff safety. The variety of threats that our schools could be exposed to include firearms/weapons, bombs, fires, or hazardous spills, among others. Threats can also come in a variety of ways. These variations make one thing certain: the only constant when dealing with a threat is that student safety is the number one priority.

These variables make it impossible to provide the community with one specific timeline on notification about an incident. We can only assure you that once we are certain that students and staff are safe and we have clear facts, we will provide notification.

The thing we will not do is add to the rumor mill by providing bits and pieces of what has been heard, opinions about what might have occurred, or unconfirmed information.

The St. Albans Police Department works closely with the district during these threats and will usually be the first to provide situation updates. You will see those on Facebook or Twitter at <https://www.facebook.com/StAlbansPoliceDept/> or <https://twitter.com/StAPoliceVT>. In certain instances, due to strategy, they will be the only voice for updates and we will share only what we receive from them.

The following factors are considered concerning release of information about a school threat:

1. Are the students and staff safe?
2. Has there been an evacuation of the school?
3. Will students be released, and where will parents go to pick them up?
4. Have the other district schools been put in lockdown?
5. Is this an active situation, or is it a search to determine the viability of the threat?
6. Has there been communication with all school groups not on campus when the threat began notifying them as to the location they return to?
7. Will the bus schedule be interrupted, or pick-up locations changed?

Depending on the threat, there may be more considerations.

Student safety is our primary concern, so we cannot simply allow students to leave school. Some students drive, some walk, some ride the bus. We must maintain a systematic approach to releasing students so that their whereabouts are known during any situation. Please await directions to pick up your child.

We recognize that parents find these threats very stressful, and lack of instant information is frustrating. Please understand that an incident at most of our schools may involve evacuating nearly 1,000 students and staff. This is no minor task. Add elements of stress and the unknown, it takes a concentrated effort by all involved to maintain the integrity of the situation, keeping students as safe as possible.

Even with our new cell phone procedures at schools, some teenagers will have cell phones, so parents may get calls or texts from their children while a situation is unraveling. Staff are busy dealing with the situation and cannot stop to send notifications until it is safe to do so.

When cleared to notify parents, a notice will be posted on the district website, maplerun.org, under news or live feed, on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), and in more advanced situations, an automated message will be delivered via email and/or telephone through the district's emergency notification system.

I hope that the community can take comfort in knowing that drills at each building are executed regularly, and safety plans are updated to account for the growing variety of possible threats. We hope that we never have to endure an active event, but we must continue to prepare for one.

More than ever, we ask for your support during these times to trust that our number one priority are the children. We are doing our job in stressful situations, and we will communicate the facts to you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Dirth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kevin Dirth
Superintendent