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February 28, 2018

Dear MUSD Parent/Guardian:

Marana Unified School District joins the nation in continuing to send our thoughts and sympathy to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School community in Parkland, Florida following the tragic shooting on February 14.

The first priority of any school district is the safety and wellness of its students and staff. Our District has made significant strides in both preventing and preparing for emergencies, and this work is ongoing. As we know, no safety/security plan is infallible, but we work consistently in these areas to make our schools as safe as possible.

Prevention and Response

First, our school district has a Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan, created in collaboration and consultation with local emergency management agencies. The purpose of the plan is to provide a step-by-step guide for maximizing safety, efficiency, and communication to address a wide range of potential emergency situations within the District. While we can't share specific information about our emergency plan, as to not undermine its' effectiveness, please know that schools regularly review their plan, conduct trainings, and practice drills throughout the year. With the support of local first responders, schools conduct safety drills to practice emergency response procedures, ensuring students and staff are aware of processes including where to report, what to do, and how to respond in the event of an emergency. These drills also assist in identifying gaps or issues in protocols so that all aspects of safety preparation, drill exercise, and guidelines may be improved upon with emergency management agencies.

Additionally, the District has a Safety and Security Coordinator. One of the responsibilities of this position is to oversee training and prevention, and work closely with emergency response agencies and school administration in the regular review of emergency plans. Continued partnerships with the Pima County Sheriff's Department and Marana Police Department allow for a full time School Resource Officer at each of our middle schools and high schools. Efforts also include the installation of security cameras and having visitors sign in at schools, as well as continued efforts to monitor and evaluate individual access points on campuses. In addition, the District uses a Threat Assessment protocol led by school psychologists to identify and respond to various levels of threat issues and safety concerns. We are continuing to evaluate tools with specific technical capabilities to identify threats, concerns and safety issues via social media and internet. The District also has a crisis team in place which provides support at the individual, building, and district level, and we continue to encourage our students, families and community to utilize our high school Speak Up Tip Lines offering a 24 hour safe and anonymous option to speak up about safety concerns.

Student Walk Outs

You may be aware that various messages posted on social media and via news accounts have encouraged students nationwide to plan walkouts. The Women's March organizers are encouraging "students,

teachers and their allies to walk out of schools on March 14 to protest gun violence." Survivors of the Parkland shooting announced a March for Our Lives event planned for March 24. Another walkout is planned for April 20, which will mark the 19th year since the tragedy at Columbine High School.

Anticipating that this movement may come to Marana schools, we want you to know how we will respond.

While we recognize our student's First Amendment rights to express their views on topics and to advocate for an issue they feel passionate about, it is our responsibility as an educational system to ensure that we provide a safe and respectful learning environment. Marana schools will not participate in any scheduled school walkout. Participation in such events may increase the sense of fear and anxiety among students, and would create additional safety concerns in ensuring sufficient supervision.

However, we also recognize that some students may have strong emotions about the recent school shooting in Florida and want to have their voices heard. Therefore, principals at our middle and high schools are having conversations with their staff and student leaders. In the event school administration learns of students planning to participate in one of these events, school administration will work with student leaders to ensure an alternative opportunity for students to assemble peacefully together, on campus, in a safe place to share their feelings. Students will be encouraged to stay on campus during school hours for safety reasons. Please assist us by speaking to your child and reminding them of the importance of remaining on campus. In accordance with District policy, students who leave campus without prior parental knowledge or permission will receive an unexcused absence.

Advocacy

I also ask you to help us by encouraging your child to be aware of their surroundings, of the behavior of others, and of anything that makes them uncomfortable and to encourage them to communicate with their teacher, school administrator, law enforcement or another adult when they see or hear something that concerns them.

While no amount of planning can guarantee that a tragedy will be averted, we are stronger when everyone is working together for the safety of our children and community. We hope you will join us in approaching school safety with a confidence that the Marana district has your child's well-being as our number one priority.

Thank you for your understanding, support, and continued trust in the Marana Unified School District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "W".

Doug Wilson, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Resources

As details of the recent shooting unfold, children often look to parents and educators for understanding and guidance. The following offers a compilation of strategies and important points to consider when discussing tragedy or crisis with children.

- Reassure children that they are safe and schools are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and staff.
- Make time to talk. Let the children's questions be the guide as to how much information is provided.
- It is suggested, given the best of all possibilities, that the maintenance of normal routines be followed. Some experts suggest to limit television viewing regarding details of the school shooting.
- Validate emotions. Explain that all feelings are understandable when a tragedy occurs. Let children talk about and express their feelings. Help put emotions into perspective and assist children in sharing their feelings appropriately.
- Early elementary school children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them.
- Upper elementary and early middle school children may be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their respective school. They may need assistance separating reality from imagination. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders who work to provide safe school environments. Safety drills and procedures are in place to maintain and protect.
- Upper middle school and high school students will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence in schools and society. Emphasize the role and support that students can offer in maintaining safe schools.
- As staff reviews safety procedures in schools, parents are encouraged to address procedures and safeguards at home, as well.
- School support and counseling specialists will, as always, be made available for students and staff, as needed.

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers>