

Information on School Safety in Denver Public Schools

- The recent shooting in Parkland, Florida is a tragedy and our hearts go out to the families, educators and community who were affected by this terrible act of violence.
- While we know how deeply these acts of violence affect our students, staff, families and community, we are committed to move forward to educate our kids and promote safe learning environments.
- Please remember that our students look to us, as parents and community leaders, for assurance that our schools are safe spaces to learn and grow. Your efforts to communicate this are an important part of supporting our students' ability to move forward.
- Encourage your staff to remind students that if they "See Something, Say Something." Most violent acts are preceded by warning signs. Staff, students, families and community may anonymously report concerns at www.safe2tell.org or 1-877-542-7233.

Talking with students

- Remind students that, today, 50 million students went to school and came home safely. Share with students that news coverage of a tragic event such as this one reaches all of us in all regions of the country.
- Ask questions that will engage youth in conveying their thoughts about a range of ideas or possible solutions. Have conversations that allow students to share what will help them feel safe.
- As adults, we often forget that, "I don't know, but let's continue talking about this," is a perfectly acceptable answer. We are used to having the answers. When times are troubling, it is okay to be patient and listen.
- With social media being a part of our kids' lives from such an early age, our young people may look to peers for support in the aftermath of troubling events. Adults need to start conversations with them to both give them a sense of context and to provide them with a sense of safety.
- Use this opportunity to connect deeply with your students. This sets the stage for more open communication about all kinds of things in the future.
- The National Association of School Psychologists has created [a resource](#) that may be helpful for talking with students and/or sharing with families. Available in 10 languages, the printable handout includes suggested talking points for children ages elementary to high school.

How DPS is working to protect our students, staff and schools

- We are committed to putting safety first in DPS.
- Our first priority is to prevent violence by creating safe and welcoming school environments. However, when a threat of violence is suspected, it is quickly and thoroughly investigated. Finally, all schools

maintain emergency procedures to keep students and staff safe in the unlikely event that there is an act of violence at or near a school.

- We continuously evaluate our processes for ensuring our schools are safe and are confident in our emergency procedures.
- We collaborate closely with Denver Police to ensure our schools are safe.
- The DPS Department of Safety trains all school personnel in emergency response procedures and conducts regularly scheduled drills to ensure the effectiveness of our procedures.
- Students and staff at all DPS schools undergo emergency training exercises each semester. DPS Safety officials monitor each drill and provide school leaders with immediate feedback on what they did well and what they need to improve upon.
- The DPS Department of Safety has a staff of 135 full-time employees who work around the clock to keep each campus in our city safe.
- The Department of Safety's dispatch center receives more than 20,000 calls for service each year and functions like any 911 call center found in a police department.
- Dispatchers monitor thousands of cameras around the school district while working with a new centralized system that can remotely secure any school within seconds. Dispatchers can also send armed roving patrols to respond directly to any emergency as well as maintain communications with Denver Police.
- Please consult with and share the DPS Emergency Information Guide for Parents at www.safety.dpsk12.org/emergency-management-resources/. This printable handout is available in 10 languages.

Suggested response for frequently asked question

1. Why doesn't DPS use metal detectors in schools?

- While metal detectors may offer a visible sign of safety, national safety experts agree that they are relatively ineffective at preventing violence.
- DPS follows national best practices that indicate the most effective means for preventing violence in the first place is by building positive relationships with students and supporting a culture where school communities will tell authorities about safety concerns within their schools. All weapon- and threat-related incidents investigated in DPS this year resulted from verbal reports or reports to Safe2Tell or Gaggle, another system we use.
- Studies have shown the use of metal detectors and other zero-tolerance approaches impede the ability to build an inclusive school culture. It is also not an inviting experience on a daily basis.
- Finally, the cost of placing metal detector equipment in more than 200 schools and staffing that equipment daily far outweigh any benefits. Metal detectors can be easily avoided (by, for example, leaving doors open or asking a friend to let someone in a side door), and the resource put to better use such as additional safety personnel, on-site counseling and other staff and in-school programs to ensure students and community create safe inclusive environments.