



Dear Parents,

Yet again we are faced with a tragedy at a school due to gun violence. From Columbine to Newtown to Parkland, these events have become far too common an occurrence. These acts strike all of us deeply - students, parents, teachers, and families. I know you join me in keeping the affected students, teachers, and families in our thoughts and prayers.

While there are no words that can make sense of such horrible events, we can help process incidents like this by pulling together as a community. As a district, our first priority is to keep students and adults in our buildings safe. What we know from research and experience is that the best form of security is preventing a tragedy before it happens. We attend to the emotional and mental well-being of our children by ensuring each student experiences a positive school culture and supportive relationships with adults both in and out of school.

In Narragansett, we pride ourselves on the fact that as a small district, every child is known and supported. We must continue to know our children well and intervene with a child and family when there are worrisome behaviors. As you know, regularly checking in with your children regarding social interactions, monitoring social media and other electronic communications, and making administrators, counselors, and student services staff aware when you have concerns are all essential to our collective well-being. Most importantly, ***continually re-enforcing with children that we must keep one another safe by reporting unusual or unsafe language or behavior will help our staff make proactive interventions to keep our schools secure.***

While the best security is preventing a tragedy before it can occur, we also want to be sure our buildings are as safe as possible. We continue to review and upgrade the security features of all of our buildings in whatever ways we can. To date, we have installed upgrades including bullet resistant protective films on our entry windows and doors, have locked access points with video surveillance and "buzz in" entry, have video cameras in all buildings, and a dedicated School Resource Officer who is continually present in our schools. We regularly train for security incidents, including lockdowns and other drills.

Additionally, we have been working with Chief Corrigan of the Narragansett Police Department and our Town Manager, Jim Manni, to review our security processes to ensure we are doing everything we can to keep our schools as safe as possible and coordinate all necessary town resources to protect our children.

While we have been working diligently to ensure our security even before this most recent tragedy, we want to be sure we are doing everything possible to keep our students and school personnel safe. We know that regular practice and review helps keep our practices current and effective. We are introducing additional training for staff and students, and will be holding a community forum in March to share relevant information and hold a conversation about next steps in securing our facilities.

We will have extra police patrols and presence in our schools in the coming days. We have our counselors and support staff available to students if they need to process their feelings, and our teachers always available to connect with students to provide support. Some additional resources that may be helpful to parents are:

- NEA (National Education Association) School Shootings and Other Traumatic Events: How to Talk to Students <http://www.nea.org/home/72279.htm>

- APA (American Psychological Association) Talking to your children about the recent spate in school shootings <http://www.apa.org/topics/violence/school-shooting.aspx>
- APA in the Aftermath of a School Shooting Help your child manage distress <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/aftermath.aspx>
- APA Managing your distress after a school shooting <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/mass-shooting.aspx>
- APA How to Talk to Children about Difficult News <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/talking-to-children.aspx>
- APA How Much News Coverage is OK for Children? <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/news-coverage.aspx>

I welcome your thoughts and feedback as we work together to maintain the security of our schools, and thank you for all you do on a daily basis to make our schools as safe as possible.

Sincerely,

Peter Cummings
Superintendent
Narragansett School System