



Dear Parents and Guardians,

Like you, we were shocked by the recent tragedy that took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County, Florida. Our hearts go out to the family and friends of those who lost loved ones in the tragic shooting. Such senseless tragedies shake us to the core and once again, bring discussions to the forefront about students, schools and safety.

As you know, there is no easy answer or action that can be taken quickly to solve problems associated with unacceptable violence in our society. There is ample evidence this violence has spilled into places of learning, shopping, entertainment and within walls of homes.

Our schools today are places in which we practice lockdown, lockdown and various safety drills; where police departments often conduct drills to prepare for the worst; where staff members wear ID badges and where a cadre of counselors are trained in grief counseling. Such practices speak volumes about the society in which we live.

That being said, our schools remain places of learning — where students are educated by some of the finest professionals. Schools are also settings where we strive to establish relationships with parents and guardians so students can receive the best education possible.

In light of the recent tragedy, we want you to be aware of steps the District has taken to make our schools safer:

- All of our schools follow a standard response protocol, which is coordinated with all emergency response and law enforcement agencies in Washington County. Our schools frequently practice emergency drills including lockdown, lockdown, fire, earthquake, and reunification procedures.
- We coordinate with all local municipality law enforcement to ensure that each are familiar with our schools security measures as well as efforts to better ensure the safety of our students and educators.
- It is the goal of every school administrator and teacher to positively affect the life of every student, every day. Such interactions include school leaders and teachers being in the halls interacting with students when classes are changing and providing an adult presence that is needed.
- Washington County School District is fortunate to have school resource officers in all of its secondary schools. Not only do these officers mitigate criminal activity on school grounds, but they also work to build trusting relationships with students so the youth feel they can report suspicious activity.

While multiple security measures are in place, the most effective prevention tool is the thousands of eyes and ears we have in our schools. Oftentimes, students are the first to see signs of a threat. Please help us to continually encourage our students to notify a trusted adult about any concern they might have, no matter how small it may appear.

We strongly encourage you to make your students aware of the SafeUT app. Through the app students and parents can anonymously report bullying, violence, threats, harassments and other concerns. The app should be downloaded on every smartphone.

We also encourage you to familiarize yourselves with the District's emergency management procedures. Click here to access the guide: <http://www.washk12.org/parents-students/emergency-plan-flipchart>.

Lastly, we encourage you to talk with your students about these events. With that dialogue, encourage them to report any time they see unsafe behavior, even if they think it might just be a prank.

Below are some resources to help you in having that conversation:

- <http://www.nea.org/home/72279.htm>
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Talking-To-Children-About-Tragedies-and-Other-News-Event.aspx>
- <http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/terrorism>
- <http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/news/help-kids-feel-safe.html>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/disaster-types/mass-violence>