

WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

1400 S. DEARING ROAD • PARMA, MICHIGAN 49269
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December 3, 2021

Dear Western Community,

The tragedy that took place at Oxford High School this week is a stark reminder that we must remain vigilant and do whatever we can to keep students safe from acts of violence. This upsetting and tragic event is a sobering reminder that we must periodically review our own security procedures to assess what we are doing well and what we can improve upon.

Since this topic is on the minds of many parents and students, I wanted to take this opportunity to share what we are doing as a school district to keep students and staff safe.

- **School Liaison Officer:** We will continue to maintain a strong partnership with local law enforcement, which includes investing in having our own full-time school liaison officer through the Jackson County Sheriff's Department.
- **Security Drills:** We will continue to conduct school security (lock down) drills as required by the Michigan School Code (minimum 3 per school year). These drills are in addition to the required fire and tornado drills.
- **Lockdown System:** We will be reviewing our lock-down system (The Boot) with staff and students to ensure they are aware of how it works and what to do. When fully operational, this includes hallway warning lights, audio alerts and immediate notification to law enforcement.
- **Threat Assessments:** We will work with law enforcement to conduct a threat assessment when a threat against the school, staff or students is made.
- **Threats Prosecuted:** We will seek prosecution for threats that are issued against our schools, staff and students. Any threat, whether real or a hoax will be treated seriously.
- **Security Review:** We will be reviewing our internal security measures with the help of law enforcement to ensure we are being as proactive as possible.

With this heightened awareness, parents and visitors to our schools will be more closely scrutinized. As a reminder, the first step for all guests is to check in at the front office. I understand this may be a little inconvenient but it is necessary to ensure the safety of those in our schools to know who is in our buildings at all times. Please be patient and understand we are doing this out of caution.

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Parents, we value your help and support. You are the first line of defense in monitoring the health and wellbeing of the students entering our buildings each day. Here are a few small things that you can do that could have a significant impact on lowering our risk of tragedy in our schools:

- **Report Threats:** Talk with your child about the importance of reporting threats of violence. Reporting a threat can be done by using the [Ok2Say](#) website, calling 911 outside of school hours, and following the systems in place at any of our schools.
- **Threats Are Serious Business:** Please, talk with your child about the importance of not making threats even as a joke. Now more than ever, threats are taken seriously. [Making a threat is a crime](#) and has serious consequences legally and from an educational perspective.
- **Understand Bullying:** If your child is experiencing bullying, be aware of the systems in place in your child's building to report these cases. As a reminder, bullying is not rude or immature comments. Bullying is targeted and repeated aggression, coercion, or intimidation that makes someone feel unsafe and alone. Talk to your child about not being a bully, ignoring bullying by others, and about what to do and how to report if they are a target of bullying. We cannot diffuse situations that we do not know are happening.
- **Situational Awareness:** We all must do our part to pay attention to our surroundings and report things that are out of place. Working together can be a great tool for our community to avoid a tragedy.
- **Stay Vigilant At Home:** Even as your children get older, they still need you to be an active support in helping them navigate their social and emotional growth. We encourage you to spend time each week doing an activity with your child that they enjoy. This is the best opportunity to get them to open up and get a glimpse into their world, what they are experiencing, and how they are fitting in or standing out at school. Teens especially often act like they want to be left alone but they desperately need connection, first at home, before they can successfully connect with others.

The safety of everyone in our district is paramount. We will continue to be diligent in educating our students while keeping them safe while they are in our care. Safety begins at home. The shaping of healthy hearts & minds begins at home. Being aware of what our kids are watching, doing, learning, posting, and listening to at home is imperative in this fight to protect our children at home and at school. We cannot prevent all crises, but together we can do our best to mitigate risks that are within our power to control.

Sincerely,



Michael Smajda
Superintendent