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Superintendent

De Soto School District #73



Superintendent's Office
Ensuring learning, growth, and success for all.

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Dear De Soto Families,

We would like to take this time to step back from the most recent events which have heightened all of our emotions regarding school security and safety and bring several actions to your attention regarding this topic. Unfortunately, there is no one step that will assure total safety; however, through the implementation of several action steps we can improve our safety and lessen the possibility of a crisis.

Over the past few weeks, administration has received reports on threats of possible violence. Through investigation, a number of reports have been either unsubstantiated. If these investigations deemed it warranted, our discipline code was followed, as threats at school will not be tolerated. Although there was no immediate threat to students' safety, it has been shared that the community would appreciate this continued communication. We respect this need to be informed and actively seek to increase this ongoing dialogue. We would like to commend our administration for following up on these reports and working cooperatively with law enforcement when necessary to swiftly and appropriately address these situations. We also want to commend the De Soto Police Department for their continued support and applaud staff and students for their quick action in notifying us of situations. Thank you for your willingness to work together in order to teach and encourage our students to report concerns.

As a district, we have been working on the following items to improve safety and security on all campuses. We would like to share with you some of the actions surrounding safety that have already begun in our schools:

- During the February 15 Board of Education meeting, the board approved a budget revision that included money to pay for modifying and upgrading entrances at the Athena and Vineland campuses.
- On February 23, administration met with St. Louis superintendents and St. Louis County police to discuss active shooter responses and protocols. On that day, Central Office administration also met with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to schedule a base assessment of the district prior to start of next school year, as well as additional training for faculty and bus drivers.
- On February 26 and 27, district administration held Community Meetings at Hardee's to be available for community input and questions.
- At the March 1 Board of Education meeting, the board discussed adding commissioned school resource officers. The board will review the addition of two commissioned officers during the March 15 board meeting.

- A well-attended community safety meeting was held Monday, March 5, in which the following three priorities were identified: unified entrances at all campuses, having police officers on campuses, and increased safety trainings for students and staff.
- On March 9, all area superintendents and district secondary and central office administration, along with De Soto Police Chief, Valle Ambulance, and other emergency departments in Jefferson County, met to discuss safety improvements in our areas.
- Throughout the past months, the superintendent met with the High School and Vineland Student Councils about safety concerns and suggestions students had to offer. These student meetings will continue.
- We have collected formal and informal input from students, staff, and parents on strategies for increasing safety throughout the district.

As part of our district strategic planning process, we are establishing a safety committee to continue this conversation and planning in the future. The items listed above are not all-inclusive and will continue to grow through the work of this committee and your ongoing partnership.

With the recent events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, several movements across the nation have taken place to address school safety. Currently, there is a national movement calling for students to stage a walk-out on Wednesday, March 14. Safety has always been our first priority, and we want our students to have the opportunity to discuss the importance of safety. After meeting with student leadership, the Senior High students will be provided the opportunity to gather in designated areas to gather and reflect at 10:00-10:17 am. At 1:35-2:15 the Junior High Character Council will welcome the Junior High student body, share pictures of the 17 victims, sound a drum as each name is called, and lead a moment of silence for all victims of school violence. Character Council will then discuss school violence and what we do at our school to stay safe (locked doors, not opening the doors for anyone, etc.).

Thank you to the De Soto Police Department who have committed officers to be present on the secondary campuses and surrounding area throughout the rest of the week, so that students can have this experience and feel assured that they are in a safe environment.

We have always taken what we do very seriously and completely recognize the importance of a safe school environment for students and staff. We want you to know that this commitment will not change, and we appreciate your partnership. If you have any questions, please contact one of us at Central Office.

With Dragon Pride,



Dr. Joshua Isaacson



Dr. Clint Freeman



Dr. Doréan Dow