



# NEWPORT INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

*A Great Tradition. A Great Future.*

March 2, 2018

Dear Newport Families and Staff:

Following the recent tragedy at Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, I want to reiterate the importance of safety in Newport Independent Schools. As a father of two children who attended public schools, the safety and security of all of our students, staff, and schools are my top priority.

I share and value your concerns, and I want you to know I am committed to doing everything possible to ensure that Newport Independent Schools are a model for school safety. I also want to let you know about several safety measures currently in place or under way to safeguard our students and staff:

**Emergency preparedness training** - all principals are required to review the school emergency plan with staff prior to the first day of instruction. All of our schools are trained in emergency preparedness and participate in drills to review their training. This year we conducted lock-down drills (practicing preparedness in case of an intruder). We have had a couple of lock-downs due to incidents within the City of Newport.

**Monitoring student devices provided by Newport Schools** – all iPads and MacBooks assigned to students are monitored thru Lightspeed School Content Filter. In addition to blocking content identified as inappropriate for students, Lightspeed reports on suspicious searches according to key words and phrases.

**Other security measures –**

- Through our city partnership, we have a school resource officer; we also hire additional security for major events;
- All staff members wear badges so they can be easily identified;
- We recently reconstructed the high school entryway for school safety; a portion of the second nickel tax will be used for reconstructing new entryways of the primary and intermediate schools this summer;
- From our website, [www.newportwildcats.org](http://www.newportwildcats.org), you can access our Safety Tip Line to report bullying, violence, and risky behaviors. This is an anonymous tip line. We also provide crisis information and phone numbers for students experiencing a personal crisis;
- I meet regularly with students from the middle and high school. We discuss school safety with this group and they are helping to develop ideas and solutions;
- Prior to the recent tragedy in Florida and right here in Kentucky, we were already involved in a safety assessment from the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) and asked for an audit from the Kentucky Center for School Safety. During these visits staff, students, and parents were asked questions regarding

the safety of our schools. We will be taking the results of both of these studies along with first responder input to create a more efficient and comprehensive safety plan that every employee will know;

- A portion of the second nickel tax is also being used to update and replace security and monitoring systems in all schools to further address safety issues;
- A school psychologist was hired to address behavior issues and support mental health wellness;
- Just last week, we hosted an event at the high school for the Northern Kentucky Education Cooperative where all Northern KY school leaders along with local law enforcement were invited to listen to Alissa Parker, mother and co-founder of Safe and Sound Schools: A Sandy Hook Initiative. Following the tragic loss of her daughter, Emilie, in the Sandy Hook school tragedy, Alissa joined another Sandy Hook mother, Michele Gay, to establish Safe and Sound Schools as a national resource for school safety. Her message regarding school safety was powerful and covered lessons learned from Sandy Hook;
- We have added additional lighting and will be adding more on the outside of our buildings;
- All district and school administrators are trained annually on school safety and crisis response. We will conduct additional training as needed, keeping the safety of our schools a priority.
- Newport first responders have used the high school to conduct extensive trainings during the summer months.

In a study conducted by the United States Secret Service and the United States Department of Education the 10 key findings they believe may have implications for the development of strategies to address the problem of targeted school violence are as follows:

- Incidents of targeted violence at school rarely are sudden, impulsive acts.
- Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack.
- Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to advancing the attack.
- There is no accurate or useful profile of students who engaged in targeted school violence.
- Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.
- Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures. Moreover, many had considered or attempted suicide.
- Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.
- Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.
- In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity.
- Despite prompt law enforcement responses, most shooting incidents were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention.

Dr. Robert Brooks, a psychologist who has written about school safety, believes the significance of relationship building is a deterrent to school violence.

He writes, "Metal detectors, cameras, and similar devices provide some protection and that should not be minimized, but they fail to address what I consider to be the vital component of school safety and violence prevention, namely, the relationship that we develop and nourish with each student."

For the past three years, Newport Schools have emphasized staff/student relationships. During the month of May all students participate in Move-up day. Move-up day provides each student with an opportunity to visit his/her classroom for the upcoming school year. This allows additional time for students to become familiar with their new teachers and surroundings; helping to alleviate some of the concerns before the start of the new school year. Secondly, as a district, we conduct Home Visit day in August. A staff member attempts to visit every student at their home. This gives teachers an opportunity to meet students in their comfort zone and also their parents/guardians. Within each of our schools, teachers and administrators practice various relationship strategies to get to know our students.

There are things you can do as parents or guardians as we work together to keep students safe:

**Bring your photo ID to your child's school** – always have a photo ID available to show the office staff when you visit a school. This is not only state law, but it also ensures that we know exactly who is in our buildings at all times.

**Update you contact information** – make sure we always have the most current contact information and enrollment form on file in your child's school office. This helps ensure that we can contact you in the event of any emergency, and it informs staff about who should have access to students while they are at school.

**If you see something, say something** – have age-appropriate discussions frequently with your child about what he or she hears or sees on the news, at school, online or in the neighborhood. Encourage your child to report any suspicious activity to a trusted adult at school or to you. Educators can play a part in prevention by creating an environment where students feel comfortable telling an adult whenever they hear about someone who is considering doing harm to another person, or even whether the person is considering harming themselves. Once such an environment is created, it will remain important that the adults in the environment listen to students and handle the information they receive in a fair and responsible manner.

**Social media** – check all social media platforms your children use on a regular basis.

**Remind your student** - school officials cannot distinguish between serious threats and jokes. Thus, any threat will be considered as serious and students will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

If you would like to have more information about school safety I would encourage you to talk with your child's principal.

Thank you for trusting us with the safety and education of your child. While we believe that we have strong safety measures in place, as a district, we are always looking for opportunities to improve.

Sincerely,



Kelly E. Middleton  
Superintendent

KM:kk