

OAK GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT #68

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Dear Parents of Oak Grove Students:

The administration and staff of Oak Grove cannot begin to express our feelings of sympathy for the victims and their families, along with the citizens and community, of Newtown, Connecticut.

The safety of our children continues to be the top priority here at Oak Grove. In the past few years, we have implemented several important security features and procedures in our buildings, including: powered exterior door locks monitored by cameras; interior building security cameras; updated Crisis Management Manual; numbering of interior and exterior doors per request of law enforcement officials; and new exterior doors and windows. The Oak Grove staff is trained at the beginning of the year by the Bartonville Police Department on what to do in the event of an active shooter situation. It is important to talk with your child about the significance of listening to his or her teacher during any crisis event. Although we realize that no plan can totally prevent random acts of senseless violence, we feel confident that the measures we have put into place create a safe environment for our students and staff.

There are always things we can learn from any incident, and we will continue to review and implement changes as appropriate to address this important issue. Effective immediately, the following procedures are slight modifications to the practices that we employ on a daily basis:

1. All exterior doors are to be locked at all times. If you should require entry into either East or West, you will need to enter at the front door, push the intercom button, and be granted access once your intent and identification have been established.
2. Visitor's Badge. Upon entry into your child's building, you are required to check in at the office, sign into the Visitor's Log Book, and be issued a Visitor's Badge. You are also asked to check out of the office once your business is complete.

Children who are struggling with their thoughts and feelings of the shooting may turn to trusted adults for help and guidance. We offer these suggestions as you talk to your child:

- **Limit media exposure.** Limit your child's exposure to media images and sounds of the shooting, and do not allow your very young children to see or hear any TV/radio shooting-related messages. Even if they appear to be engrossed in play, children often are aware of what you are watching on TV or listening to on the radio. What may not be upsetting to an adult may be very upsetting and confusing for a child. Limit your own exposure as well. Adults may become more distressed with nonstop exposure to media coverage of this shooting.

- **What does your child already know?** Start by asking what your child/teen already has heard about the event from the media and from friends. Listen carefully; try to figure out what he or she knows or believes. As your child explains, listen for misinformation, misconceptions, and underlying fears or concerns. Understand that this information will change as more facts about the event are known.
- **Gently correct inaccurate information.** If your child/teen has inaccurate information or misconceptions, take time to provide the correct information in simple, clear, age-appropriate language.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions, and answer those questions directly.** Your child/teen may have some difficult questions about the incident. For example, he/she may ask if it is possible that it could happen at their school; he/she is probably really asking whether it is “likely.” The concern about re-occurrence will be an issue for caregivers and children/teens alike. While it is important to discuss the likelihood of this risk, she is also asking if she is safe.
- **Be patient.** In times of stress, children/teens may have trouble with their behavior, concentration, and attention. While they may not openly ask for your guidance or support, they will want it. Adolescents who are seeking increased independence may have difficulty expressing their needs. Both children and teens will need a little extra patience, care, and love. (Be patient with yourself, too!)

Additional information and resources are available online from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, www.nctsn.org. If you or your child needs additional support, please contact your school administrator.

Providing a safe learning environment for our students and safe working environment for our staff is our first priority. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail the administration.

Educationally Yours,

Chad Wagner – Superintendent
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