



Office of the Superintendent

Brett White, Superintendent
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March 2, 2018

Dear USD 385 Parents, Students, & Staff,

Providing educational excellence and opportunities for our students to succeed is the mission of USD 385 Andover Public Schools. An important part of the commitment to excellence means providing a safe learning environment for our students.

Please know that communicating to you in this way does not mean there have been any safety threats or concerns to our district or our facilities. Instead, in light of recent events involving school safety concerns, and to provide transparency and assurance when it comes to our long-standing commitment to safety, I felt it necessary to update you on our comprehensive safety plan.

We have implemented a comprehensive safety approach that includes plans for intruders as well as fire protection and tornado shelters, along with many other potential hazards and emergencies. The focus of this letter will be safety as it relates to intruders, because I realize it is on your minds following the recent shooting in Parkland, Florida. Here is an overview of some of the important ways that we keep students and staff safe:

* In 2015, in partnership with the City of Andover, the district expanded its School Resource Officer (SRO) program. We hired two additional SRO's, making a total of four district-wide. There is an SRO who offices out of each middle school and high school in the district. The SRO's also spend time in our elementary schools. One of the most important functions of our SRO's is building trusting, positive relationships with students.

* We have a strong relationship with the Andover Police Department. District officials meet regularly with Andover Police Department leadership. The Andover Police Department is one of only eight departments in the state of Kansas that has received the highest level of accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). APD is an exemplary department that we are proud to partner with.

* Several years ago the district implemented the "Run, Hide, Fight" model that we use to train staff and also talk about with students. "Run, Hide, Fight" training provides the framework for how staff should respond if an intruder enters the building. Ongoing training is provided in this model, including drills with staff on professional learning days that simulate an active shooter situation with a de-brief afterward.

* A few years ago the district invested in locks for all interior classrooms. Doors can be locked from the inside without our teachers having to step outside their classrooms, which is an important way that we can protect students in an emergency situation.

* Our schools take threats very seriously. We have a threat assessment protocol in place to determine the credibility of a potential threat.

* We focus on building positive relationships with students, and cultivating an environment where students feel valued and connected. This is a powerful way to prevent violence in schools.

"Building on a Foundation of Excellence"

* This year the district hired additional counselors for each of the secondary schools. We now have two counselors at each middle school, and three counselors at the high schools. Our counselors play an essential role in helping to meet the social and emotional needs of students.

* Safety planning is essential. We have a district safety coordinator and a committee that meets regularly to ensure that we are responsive to changing needs. Staff receive ongoing training as well.

* Each month I meet with a group of fifteen high school students that I call my Superintendent's Student Advisory Team. Our March meeting will focus on school safety. It is important to discuss students' questions and concerns.

Finally, I'm looking forward to the safety enhancements district-wide with the bond issue that was passed a year ago. When construction is completed, each of our schools will have a secure entry way for all visitors who enter our facilities during the school day. Construction on those safety enhancements at our elementary schools is expected to be completed by August of this year, with additional safety enhancements to our middle and high schools coming throughout the construction process. You can follow the bond construction process [here](#).

Thank you for entrusting the district to provide safe learning environments for our students. We care deeply about our students, and each of us has an important role in safeguarding them. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your child's principal or me, and we will be happy to visit. Together, we can continue to provide safe, positive, exemplary learning environments for all students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brett White
USD 385 Superintendent