

**February 9, 2018**

***A Letter to the Mansfield School Community about School Safety***

***From***

***Superintendent Teresa Murphy***

***Fire Chief Neal Boldrighini***

***Police Chief Ron Sellon***

School safety is our highest priority. Behind these words are actions that provide protection for our students and staff. This letter is to inform you about the steps that the Mansfield Public Schools, the Mansfield Police Department, and the Mansfield Fire Department have taken during the past few years to assure that our learning environment espouses our shared belief about school safety.

- ***Schools Emergency Planning Team:*** Chief Boldrighini, Chief Sellon, Superintendent Murphy, and our deputies are the core members of this group. Other group members are identified from our organizations based on their specific skill set and attend meetings on an as-needed basis. A focus for the team this year is reunification of students with families in the event of a district-wide evacuation. This involves using local, regional and state assets.
- ***Student Handbooks:*** Oftentimes, when incidents occur in schools, staff members, students, and families ask for specific information that we are unable to provide due to confidentiality laws for children and teens. It can be frustrating to hear that an administrator can't give you details, but to understand the parameters of the consequences and actions that the Mansfield Public Schools take regarding discipline of students, please refer to the section in your child's Student Handbook about *Discipline Procedures and Due Process*.
- ***Specialized Personnel:***
  - ***School Resource Officer:*** Chief Sellon has assigned a full-time police officer to the schools. Detective Ken Wright's office is located in Mansfield High School but he is a familiar face in all of the schools. His presence—or that of one of the officers who substitutes for him—provides an invaluable resource for faculty, students and parents. He is supplemented by several part time SRO's, Officer Derek McCune, Officer Thomas Connor, and Officer Gregg Kennedy. Additionally the shift officers each day conduct random walkthroughs of the schools, interacting with kids and faculty to provide a more approachable resource. The schools, working with the police department through its Crime Analyst identified the weeks of highest calls for service historically, and in adding supplemental help targeted specifically to these weeks and locations have reduced the root problems that resulted in the calls this year.
  - ***Physical, Mental and Behavioral Health Supports:*** Our school nurses are Registered Nurses (R.N.), school psychologists hold Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (C.A.G.S.), and we have a district Board Certified Behavior Analyst (B.C.B.A.). These professionals provide specialized support in the areas of physical, mental and behavioral support to students. School psychologists are qualified to do risk assessments which, together with families' personal practitioners, help to guide decisions about when a student is safe to attend school.

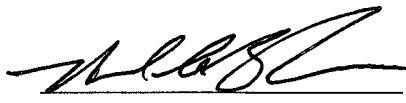
- *Communication:* Social media, telephone calls, emails, TV stations, and the district website all play a part in our effort to communicate information to students and families. It is vitally important to us that when we report information to families that we communicate accurately and in a timely manner. In this age of instant news, oftentimes people believe we can do this more quickly than would be prudent for the individuals involved in a particular situation. The following provides you with some details about our communication tools. Please refer to the Student Handbooks for additional information regarding Home/School Communication.
  - Sometimes cancellations for inclement weather can be announced the evening prior to school; on the other hand, sometimes it will require us to make a *very* early morning announcement.
  - When an incident occurs at school, our #1 goal is to reach out to the students and families who are directly impacted. Only then do we consider whether the issue warrants a classroom- school- or district-wide communication to families.
  - We use the *School Messenger Notification System* to communicate important information to families. The first contact on a student's emergency contact list will receive phone calls and an email to alert families when needed.
  - The district's website, **[mansfieldschools.com](http://mansfieldschools.com)**, is an important source of information.
  - The district's emergency planning team has discussed how we would handle the communication that would be needed in the event of a district-wide school evacuation. You will be kept informed by the collaborative efforts of Superintendent Murphy, Police Chief Sellon and Fire Chief Boldrighini.
  
- *Locked exterior doors with cameras that feed to office monitors:* Our school office staff views visitors who are then "buzzed" into the buildings. Visitors are asked to go to the school office to sign the visitor registry and wear a name tag before proceeding to their destination.
  
- *Crisis Response Manuals:* Classrooms and office spaces have a *Crisis Response Manual* that outlines the steps that the teacher, administrator, or other staff member should follow when faced with one of approximately twenty-five emergency situations including bomb threats, intruders, natural disasters, violence, hazardous materials, and sexual assaults.
  
- *Incident Management Protocol and Critical Tasks Plan (I.M.P.A.C.T. Plan):* Understanding that emergency response is a community-wide call to action, the police, fire and school departments took a wide-ranging look at not only our own individual responses and how they intermingle, but also the aftermath and these organizations, the community and regional responses would be impacted. To this end, site surveys of all the schools were conducted, potential vulnerabilities identified, and individual plans of action crafted from each. From this was born out the IMPACT plan which not only took a view of critical incidents from the aftermath perspective but also identified ways to prevent them at the schools. Among the recommendations:
  - Crime prevention through environmental design strategies to keep staff and students safer both for potential capital items as well as simpler operational items.
  - Training in critical incident and violent intruder response by all staff which focused on simple easier to remember fundamentals.
  
- *Emergency Medical Response Plan:* The fire department and school nurses have developed a document that outlines steps to follow if a student or staff is in need of emergency medical

assistance. The two agencies have been training together on how to respond to large-scale incidents and triage techniques.

- *Training:* Students and staff receive training and practice skills in a variety of ways:
  - The fire department provides developmentally appropriate lessons to students in kindergarten through grade 6. These lessons have reaped real-life results with the heroic actions of many of our Mansfield students in their homes and neighborhoods.
  - The police department trained all school staff in the 4 L's (Locate, Lockdown, Leave, Live) this year during professional development time.
  - *Safety Drills:* Announced and unannounced fire drills are conducted by the Mansfield Fire Department. We schedule bus evacuation drills with Connolly Bus Company. Schools schedule lock down drills; many of which are coordinated with the police department. These include pre-drill briefings with police and administrators and post-drill briefings with the same groups.
  - For the second year, the Superintendent will lead a team of administrators and school resource officers to the Massachusetts Juvenile Police Officer's Association Conference so that they can bring back to the district the latest research and resources to provide a safer school environment.
  
- *Security Cameras:* In addition to the exterior door cameras, security cameras are in the interior hallways of QMS, MHS, and on several busses. These videos, which are monitored in our central dispatch, help maintain the security integrity of the building as well as those of other public areas on the grounds.
  
- *Hazardous Materials:* The schools work with the Fire Department to maintain a complete inventory of all chemicals used within science labs and in the facilities department. Inspections are made annually to determine that these are stored properly and protection is in place.

Prevention is the key to reduction in any and all incidents that may put our students at risk. Similar to the significant decline in school fires nationally, our goal at Mansfield Public Schools is to minimize and potentially eradicate exposure to violence. Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

  
Superintendent Teresa Murphy

  
Fire Chief Neal Boldrighini

  
Police Chief Ron Sellen