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Parents,

This is the letter, as an educator, I never want to write. As educators and parents we should never have to discuss the possibility of violence at schools. Unfortunately, it is a topic that needs to be spoken about and discussed. To be clear, **WE WILL ALWAYS MAKE SAFETY PRIORITY ONE IN THIS DISTRICT**. Safety trumps all and many conversations are being had about how to best protect our students. None of the conversations have been, or should be taken lightly. I am going to use the rest of the letter to let the parents and community know where we are in relation to school safety and what we are looking at going forward. There may not be as many details as everyone would like, but this should give a high altitude view of where we are.

1. We are going to have a greater presence of police officers at school. They may be there in the mornings, afternoons, various days, at various doors, in the hallways, etc. Just because a police car is in front of one of our buildings does not mean we have an issue, we are simply having a greater police presence moving forward. This could include local police, sheriff's department and possibly state police.
2. I, along with other superintendents, local, and state officials are in discussion about some security possibilities moving forward. Anytime we talk about adding staff, money is a discussion that has to be had. Hopefully having these discussions with community leaders will lead to some outcomes that are affordable and bring some additional security to our schools.
3. As of now, we will not be installing metal detectors. The fact we have metal detectors would do little to deter someone truly determined to bring harm to a school. In addition, we would need additional staff to watch the metal detectors and would have other concerns to overcome. This is not a bad idea, but does not play out well practically.
4. We are going to do more drills to practice for school violence situations. In the last 50 years, no school children have died in a school fire. Buildings are built better, but we know exactly what to do when the alarm sounds. We need to be equally ready when in the event of potential school violence.
5. We are working with our security company on some additional equipment in every district building. Technology is changing quickly, and we need to be up to date as much as possible.
6. We are talking with kids about making sure they report potential issues. This is our best way to find out potential threats. In the near future, we will be talking to most of the district students about this topic as age is appropriate.
7. We will take all information about potential threats seriously. We will work with law enforcement at whatever level is needed. Depending on the threat, we would most likely contact local authorities as well as call the FBI tip line. I want to let trained professionals decide if the threat is credible or not. My judgment alone is not enough in these cases. **WE WILL NEVER LET STUDENTS ENTER A BUILDING OR SITUATION WE BELIEVE MAY BE UNSAFE.**
8. Other measures are being considered as we move forward. Depending on cost of ideas, practicality of ideas, sustainability of ideas etc. we will see how some of the ideas play out. I am not trying to hide ideas or safety measures, this is just a very fluid time in education on this topic, and we have to evaluate as we go.

Some closing thoughts. Two weeks ago, as I announced, there was no specific threat to anyone or any building. A student had overheard a conversation about a conversation that happened several years ago in another town. We never believed anyone to be in danger. Even though we firmly believed that, we still contacted local authorities just to be cautious. Having officers at the school sent rumors and social media was buzzing. When events occur, we will get information out as soon as possible in conjunction with local authorities. Our primary responsibility is safety of staff and students. Unless you here the information from a school administrator, I would be cautious in totally believing it. People shared information out of good intent, but not necessarily the correct information. As soon as we know definitive information and have cleared the info with law enforcement or other authorities, we will release what we know via the all call system, schools web site, and Facebook account. If you are very anxious, please call the school office. I would rather have the phone calls for correct information, than I would incorrect information swirling causing additional problems. I share in being a parent and last week Harrisburg High School had a similar incident occur. My son is a sophomore at HHS. I trust that the staff at the school are keeping him and the other students safe. They responded in much the same way we did and all went well. We are asking for your trust as well. We will never intentionally put anyone in harm's way and will always keep safety as our primary goal.

As a parent, I always THINK I know what my own children are doing. I THINK I know what they are putting on social media and texting to others. I am also not naïve to believe they are far more tech savvy than I am. I have heard rumors that if they were true would really disturb me as a parent. Examples coming to my mind is sexting, drugs, parties, etc. I have never seen these posts, but I would make it a point to check accounts, passwords etc. Also, have discussions with your children about the world we live in and the importance of not making idol threats on social media or putting pictures or words up that could be construed as a threat. We are all very busy parents, but I (we) probably need to invest more time into that area of our children's lives. If we don't, no one will.

One common theme authorities have linked to school violence is students being socially unaccepted and the desensitization of violence through video games and movies. Some will say I am stretching this, but the research says kids spend more screen time in some form than ever before. The more time spent playing and watching violent material, the more likely the desensitization to violence occurs. Many will say the research is bad and they are just games. This may be, but since more violent and graphic games and media became more readily available, we have seen more issues at schools.

On Valentines Day, 17 young adults tragically lost their lives, and we should mourn the loss of their lives, and a society that has created violent people like the shooter in those rare incidents. We should also remember that same day 50.7 million students went to school, had a normal day and came home safe. We will, and should be aware of dangers, but we need to also keep in perspective that statistically, school is the safest place for students. We should and will prepare for the worst and put as many precautions in place as possible, but we also need to keep in perspective we want our schools to be places to learn, enjoy, play, and interact. I want all of our students to not look back someday and simply remember the shadows of a metal detector or a police presence necessary at all times. I don't take safety issues lightly, yet I want our students and community to keep all of this in perspective and realize statistically, we are very safe.

It is my hope this letter gives you a different perspective and information about how we are moving forward. If you ever have any suggestions or just need to talk, please feel free to come by or call me. I will be happy to speak with any of you.

Sincerely,

Shain Crank, Superintendent Galatia CUSD #1