

March 6, 2018

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Dear EUSD District Staff and Families,

This has been a difficult past few weeks for public schools across America. The tragedy that occurred in Parkland, Florida has prompted many of us to reflect on the safety of our schools and what can we do in response to this senseless violence. It seems that there are news reports (substantiated and unsubstantiated) daily that could cause additional alarm in the community. It is our intent to share news with you as it relates to our District and our students. Today's email is to share with you how we are continuing to address safety in the Encinitas Union School District, as well as share our commitment to support students' emotional well-being and sense of security at their schools.

We want to reassure you that we take school safety and security very seriously in the Encinitas Union School District. We are vigilant and proactive when it comes to our students' safety and have clear plans and procedures to deal with emergency situations. We have safety plans in place at every school, we practice necessary drills and we work collaboratively with safety professionals and law enforcement to ensure all safety protocols are up to date. We realize that there is no perfect answer to crises faced at schools, but we are committed to doing all that we can to be proactive in terms of student safety and well-being. To this end, we are attaching some information regarding talking to students about safety and violence. We are an elementary school district and recognize that there are different maturity levels and social emotional needs of students in our schools, therefore, we realize some of the best discussions surrounding difficult topics are done at home. Please find the resources at the bottom of the letter from the National Association of School Psychologists and from Sharp Health Care to use as you see fit.

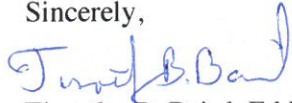
Beyond assuring safety, we also want to recognize that many of our staff, parents, and some students want to add their voice to the national conversation around this issue. The media has reported that there are a number of student marches and protests regarding this issue planned over the next few months. Many of our local high schools are recognizing this by scheduling events on their school campuses. I support our high school and college students engaging in this civic action but I do have concerns that such activities are not appropriate for elementary school student audiences. Although some of our upper grade students are mature enough to have this conversation, many of our younger students are not. Our conversation on this topic for most of the students in our schools should be to reassure them that they are safe. For this reason, I do not believe that public displays during the school day are the best format for our staff, students, or parents that want to express their voice on this topic.

That does not mean, however, that we can't engage in this conversation. There are a number of ways that our staff, students, and parents can make their voices heard without exposing our younger students to this debate. The most obvious is to write letters to our state and nationally elected officials. Some of our students may also want to create public service announcement videos or even journal their thoughts or ideas on the issue. Perhaps the most powerful thing that we all can do is find ways to reach out to others, make personal connections, and help build a culture of inclusion for all. Every week I see students working

in the SOAR program supporting their buddies with special needs. I see older students tutoring younger children. I watch our schools celebrate Kindness Week and then carry these activities on throughout the school year. These are some of our strongest tools in this work and we need to continue to support and expand these actions.

Finally, we need to recognize our role as the adults in this conversation. Our children are looking to us for support, strength, and security. We need to continue to be stabilizing influences for them. If they are worried, we need to support them. If they need to talk, we need to listen. As educators and parents, we need to work together to provide this support.

Sincerely,



Timothy B. Baird, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Resources:

National Association of School Psychologists

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers>

Sharp Health Care

https://www.sharp.com/health-news/talking-with-kids-about-school-violence.cfm?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=Social%20Media&utm_content=talking-about-school-violence_20180228&utm_campaign=Mental%20Health