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Superintendent

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Dear Lampeter-Strasburg School District Families,

Our hearts continue to be with everyone touched by recent acts of school violence across our nation. These events have driven an increased interest in student-led civic engagement efforts and actions, including the idea of school walkouts. Lampeter-Strasburg School District supports students' constitutional rights to peaceful assembly and free expression. Our goal in responding to any student walkout plans, and other forms of peaceful assembly, is to try and keep focus on teaching and learning while providing guidance and planning to ensure student and staff safety.

Based upon social media messaging and continued media coverage, we are aware of nationally-promoted events occurring on March 14 and April 20 across the nation. Our number one priority each day is to ensure the safety of our students. While we are not currently aware of any student-led plans at this point in time, we will have additional police presence on campus as a proactive measure on both March 14 and April 20. Our biggest fear for students leaving the building during the school day is their safety, particularly given the major construction activity occurring on campus as part of our Outdoor Athletic Campus Enhancement Plan.

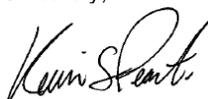
Regarding the topic of safety, I would like to take the opportunity to share a few of the safety measures that we employ on a daily basis to keep students and staff safe. We have a District All Hazards Plan that addresses our response to a number of emergency situations. This plan is reviewed on an annual basis and is updated as needed as part of any debriefing process when it is implemented. Specific plans and protocols are not made public, as this would compromise the safety of our students and staff should they fall into the hands of someone intending to do harm. Each school building has the recommended single point of entry with an intercom, buzzer, and surveillance cameras. Each of our school buildings has had a Risk and Vulnerability Assessment completed by the Pennsylvania State Police with the involvement of local police. The suggested recommendations from these assessments have been implemented. The District has previously participated in a Readiness and Emergency Management for School (REMS) grant in conjunction with the local intermediate unit. This provided a number of trainings and resources for staff members and included the review and sharing of our All Hazards Plan (as well as building blueprints, schematics, shutoffs, etc.) with first responders (police, Lancaster County SERT Team, fire, ambulance). We have a Memorandum of Understanding with West Lampeter Township Police Department that is reviewed and updated with the Chief of Police. We have staff trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). This system allows us to utilize consistent procedures and language with all emergency personnel. Staff members have been trained in ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) as part of our response procedures to an intruder. This program is not simply intended for schools; it is a life skill that can be applied to any situation or location involving violence. ALICE has been recommended and implemented based upon the review of research by safety experts from past acts of violence across the nation. In addition to our regular safety drills conducted in the schools with students and staff, we have also conducted tabletop exercises with trained facilitators to review how emergency situations would be handled.

We are blessed to have a strong local police presence and partnership with both West Lampeter Township and Strasburg Borough police departments. Officers from both departments recently formed a team and competed in our student dodgeball tournament at Martin Meylin Middle School. Local police have conducted trainings on our campus, without students present, in an effort to familiarize themselves with the layout of the buildings in the event of an actual emergency. Additionally, the Board of School Directors continues to make safety our number one priority for students and staff. The current budget draft for the next school year includes funding for a School Resource Officer (SRO). There are many details that will need to be worked out with West Lampeter Township and the Police Department, but we are thankful for the strong partnership that we currently enjoy and look forward to the implementation of a School Resource Officer.

We continue to encourage all staff members to actively listen to students' fears and concerns. As always, students may speak with their teachers, counselors, or principals to share questions, concerns or suggestions. We encourage you to have conversations at home as well. The National Association of School Psychologists has published a resource on talking to students about violence. It can be found here: <https://goo.gl/WJpX9f>

Safety remains the top priority of the Lampeter-Strasburg School District. We are blessed as a district to have strong partnerships with our parents and the community alike. I encourage everyone to offer any suggestions for the increased safety of our students and staff. Additionally, please continue to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity in our community, around our schools, or bus stops immediately to local law enforcement. Thank you for your continued support of the work we do on a daily basis for the children of our community. Should you have any specific questions regarding the safety measures at your student's building or suggestions to offer, please feel free to contact the building principal.

Sincerely,



Kevin S. Peart, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools