



Wissahickon School District

Bleeding Blue with a Heart of Gold

February 15, 2018

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I want to take this opportunity to share a few thoughts about safety in our schools.

On the heels of another tragic school shooting, I feel it is important to outline how we operationalize the fact that we consider safety to be a top priority in Wissahickon.

- ✓ First off, from a security standpoint, we follow the very best, expert-recommended safety protocols. Staff and students all know what to do in the case of an active shooter, and we regularly drill for that and other emergencies. Our buildings all have controlled access points, and although no such provision is failsafe against a well-armed intruder, every little bit helps. Additionally, we have a daily police presence in every school, and other highly-effective security measures are in place that are, for tactical reasons, best not shared publicly (but I can assure you that all have come from the invaluable partnerships we have with all three of our local police departments).
- ✓ Another important piece of our safety approach is the identification, intervention and support mechanisms that are all part of our mental health program. We have multiple, highly qualified, caring and dedicated staff members in every school trained in best practices of all the Student Assistance Program ("SAP") elements, and we have valuable relationships with local mental health providers as well that augment our own staff members' expertise.

One last thought lands me in unusual political waters for a school superintendent. **I believe it is time for all of us, public school leaders included, to have the courage to call for a ban on rapid-fire assault weapons.** Enough is enough. We need to stop framing this as a rollback of constitutional rights, and we need to stop framing it as some sort of partisan political issue. Instead, we need to start framing this as protecting kids. Period. We need to be done with the fallacious, slippery-slope argument that a ban on these people-killing weapons will be a ban on all guns. No, it will not. I don't have any patience when it comes to partisan politics, especially in the realm of education, and how this can fall prey to Democrat vs. Republican posturing is beyond me. We need to act now to protect students now.

In closing, our hearts go out to the families in Florida. I cannot imagine what they are going through. Here in Wiss Nation, we are grateful for the community support and partnerships we have when it comes to school security, and remain 100% committed to the safety of our students and staff members. Nothing is more important.

Sincerely,

James A. Crisfield

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Superintendent

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