



Office of the Superintendent

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March 8, 2018

Dear OCSD5 Parents and Guardians:

The past couple of weeks have been very challenging times for our nation, our county, and our schools. Innocent lives were taken away from the world because warning signs were not observed, taken seriously, or investigated. There are students who have experienced something no human being should ever have to endure. This horrible action has caused ripple effects across many facets to include members of congress, state legislators, airline industries, service providers, local companies, educators, and most importantly, our students.

I am writing this letter to you with every intention to assure you that we take these series of events and the lasting impact they will have for our future very seriously. OCSD5 is committed to keeping our students, employees, schools, and community safe. It has to be a superintendent's worst nightmare to live out the events of what has occurred in Florida and that is something I never want to experience. I wanted to share with you three areas that we are focused on in our district to keep our schools safe.

Facilities: We are working diligently to secure access into our school facilities. In the past, our doors were always open as we encouraged and welcomed our parents and our community come in and visit our schools. With recent events, we have seen the need to implement a more secure procedure for entering our schools. We are moving forward with plans to require individuals who are visiting our schools to be admitted through a controlled, locked entry door by a trained member of our staff. This procedure may vary slightly from school to school depending on the physical layout of the facility, but it may be as simple as ringing a doorbell to alert staff that you are present at the door. You wouldn't just let someone into your home without checking to see who it is. We believe that our schools should meet this same standard. These procedures have already been implemented in some of our schools and we are presently working on completing the installations at the rest.

Law Enforcement and Security: At this time, all of our schools have security personnel on site. Some of the security personnel are certified School Resource Officers while others are private security officers. We have great partnerships with our local law enforcement agencies including the Orangeburg County Sheriff's Office, the Orangeburg Department of Public Safety, and the Town of North Police Department. We actively engage these agencies in our security planning and training. We will continue to work with our local law enforcement agencies to ensure a safe environment in our schools.

Training: We train our teachers and staff in many types of emergency situations. You may remember participating in fire drills when you were a student. We still conduct fire drills but have expanded the training to incorporate such things as severe weather drills, intruder drills, school evacuations, and lockdown and

lockout procedures. We hope we never have to utilize this training during an actual emergency, but we want to be prepared should an emergency event occur. The district employs a full-time Security Director who oversees our training efforts and conducts both announced and unannounced safety drills regularly within our schools.

I am sharing this information with you to let you know that the safety of our students is a priority not just for me, but also for our Board of Trustees. As we move forward, we will keep our attention focused on providing safe and secure school facilities.

Finally, I want to encourage you to share information with us whenever you observe a situation that you believe might present a safety concern at one of our schools. I would also encourage you to ask your child to do the same. Some students believe that if they see something, they will not tell anyone because they don't want to be a "snitch". Please talk with your child and let them know there is a difference between "reporting" and "snitching" about a potentially dangerous situation. We are stronger when we work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jesse Washington III", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jesse Washington III, Ph.D.

Superintendent

Orangeburg Consolidated School District Five