



## WILLIAMSBURG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Williamsburg Elementary School Families:

It's with a heavy heart that I am again writing in light of another school tragedy. It's important that you know that the safety and well-being of your child is the top priority of every member of our team at Williamsburg Elementary School. I'm writing you today to share with you how we keep our students safe at W.E.S. and how we are handling recent events in our country at Williamsburg Elementary School.

The recent tragedies our country has endured will undoubtedly bring about many emotions in our children including, but not limited to: fear, sadness, anxiety and anger. To meet the needs of our students and help during this difficult time, Williamsburg Elementary School has established the following protocol to deal with issues stemming from recent events:

- We will not address the topics in any whole-group discussions in our Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms.
- When students in grades K-3 ask questions related to the tragedies or express fear, sadness, or similar feelings, our staff will address these fears individually and separate from the classroom.
- When students in grades 4 & 5 ask questions about the incident or express fear, sadness, or similar feelings, the questions will be handled with tremendous care by our classroom teachers. Our staff will strive to provide brief, simple information that is balanced with reassurances about our well-being and safety. If at any time the class-wide conversations extend beyond an appropriate boundary, we will move to address the specific concerns of the children individually or outside of the classroom.
- We will continue to be vigilant in looking for students who are having difficulty dealing with this tragedy.
- We will continue to make additional school personnel available to meet with students as needed.

Please know that your child's well-being and safety is our highest priority. We will continue to follow and practice our emergency procedures to maintain a safe and secure learning environment at Williamsburg Elementary School. There are steps we've taken that are part of our emergency planning with law enforcement that we don't share with the public. Our emergency plans are purposefully not subject to public record laws – this is for the protection of everyone involved.

All of us must take responsibility in keeping our community and children safe. A critical aspect of this is sharing concerns when they exist. To help with this, our district maintains a safety line where students, parents and community members can report potential threats, any concern related to student safety 24/7, or bullying. There are two easy, convenient ways to report to our safe line: one can simply call 513-818-BURG (2874) or email: [safe@burgschools.org](mailto:safe@burgschools.org)

Whenever possible, students, parents and community members are encouraged to report all safety concerns directly to a district staff member. Never hesitate to contact me directly if you have any concerns or questions. I can be reached at 513-724-2241 or at [dunn\\_k@burgschools.org](mailto:dunn_k@burgschools.org). **It's important that we teach our children the "see something, say something" protocol.** When we see or hear something that isn't safe, we want our children, without hesitation, to tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

On the back side of this letter I've included some advice and resources to help your family.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Best Wishes,

Kevin Dunn, Principal - Williamsburg Elementary School

**Dr. David Schonfeld, MD, Director, National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, provided the following tips to help adults talk with children about the tragedy:**

- Minimize your child's exposure to media (television, radio, print, internet, and social media) and if they do watch, consider recording, screening and watching with them. Remember children often overhear or see what you are watching on TV or listening to on the radio and may be exposed directly as the news evolves through the internet or social media. While children may seek and benefit from basic information about what happened so that they can understand what is happening in their world, they (and adults) don't benefit from graphic details or exposure to disturbing images or sounds. In the aftermath of a crisis is a good time to disconnect from all media and sit down together and talk as a family.
- Encourage your child to ask questions now and in the future, and answer the questions directly. Like adults, children are better able to cope with a crisis if they feel they understand it. Question-and-answer exchanges provide you with the opportunity to offer support as your child begins to understand the crisis and the response to it.
- Reassure the child that feeling sad, worried or angry is okay. Let your child know that it is all right to be upset about something bad that happened. Use the conversation to take the opportunity to talk about other troubling feelings your child may have.
- If you have concerns about your child's behavior, contact his or her pediatrician, other primary care provider, or a qualified mental health care specialist.

**Suggestions provided by pediatric psychologists to help adults reassure and comfort their children during this difficult and confusing time:**

- Ask your child what he/she heard about the incident.
- Listen to their concerns and emotions.
- Answer their questions with age appropriate information.
- Support, comfort and reassure them of their safety at home and school.
- Observe/watch for symptoms of problems: appetite, sleep, worries, aggression, anger, sadness.
- Protect them from other media exposure and information that creates more fear and problems.
- Call for other professional help for your child if needed.
- Review with school personnel how they are handling security and counseling students at school.
- Pay attention to and take care of your own concerns and worries as a parent.
- Keep watch over time as concerns and symptoms may come later.

**Additional advice:**

- Put away the electronic devices as much as possible. Make sure there is a healthy balance of screen time within your home. Elementary students don't yet possess the life experience and more importantly, the social-emotional development to have unsupervised access to social media accounts and the internet.
- Some studies show that media violence can be a risk factor for aggressive behavior and other negative outcomes. Parents should exercise caution to minimize exposure to violent content. Children may innocently seek information only to be subject to graphic details or exposure to disturbing images or sounds.
- Eliminate any access your child has to violent content and games. Violent content is found everywhere it seems: on television, through first-person violent video games, on social media and the internet. There are great resources available on the internet such as Common Sense Media to help parents navigate the ever-changing and challenging digital world.