



## SANTA FE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Superintendent of Schools



July 11, 2018

Dear Santa Fe ISD Parents,

We know that the events of May 18 have broken our hearts and changed our lives in many ways forever. Above all else, the safety and emotional well-being of our students and staff remains our highest priority. As we move forward, it is my desire to have ongoing conversations with our students, staff and parents about their safety and emotional well-being and to provide all of the resources they need to have the best and safest learning opportunities for each of our students. I apologize for the length of this message, and ask you to please take a moment to read through it carefully.

Throughout these events, our community continues to work together to do what is best for our students. We are blessed to have actively engaged parents and community members, who passionately care for and support our schools. Though our community members may have differing opinions on safety and security priorities, we all want to do everything possible to ensure that the best safety and security measures are in place when our students begin classes on August 20.

Our Board and administration often face challenging decisions, and we rely on our community engagement systems to allow us to arrive at solutions that reflect the values and priorities of our stakeholders. Our work is not easy, and the community engagement process is not always smooth. However, the process is designed to ensure community input is part of the District's decision-making process in order to make the very best decisions for our students. We all want to do everything possible to be ready for the 2018-19 school year. We will continue to ask the community for their input as we move forward to provide the best teaching and learning environment possible for our students and staff.

We want to thank the **Santa Fe Strong Safety and Security Committee** members who have been meeting and discussing detailed research findings and best practices to finalize priorities and recommendations regarding Hardening of the Schools and Policy Changes to bring to the Board of Trustees for implementation at all schools before the start of the 2018-19 school year.

The committee will meet again on July 12<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. The Board will consider and take action on these recommendations at a Special Board Meeting on July 16. In addition to finalizing

recommendations, the committee will also discuss Mental Health and Support Services; and after that, the committee will continue to address the remaining priority issues and concerns. The committee's safety priorities include, but are not limited to: adding police officers in hallways and entrances, installing metal detectors at all schools, providing training on and enforcement of current policies related to dress code, backpacks and the use of student IDs; installing external and internal door locks and updating the security alarm systems, monitoring student social media in coordination with trained counselors and updating the security systems.

### **Special Board Meeting called on July 16; Safety and security measures already put in place and others planned to be implemented by August 20**

The Board of Trustees has called a Special Meeting on Monday, July 16, at 5:00 p.m. to consider recommendations from the Santa Fe Strong Safety and Security Committee and determine immediate objectives regarding Hardening of the Schools and Policy Changes for the start of school on August 20. The District continues to invite all stakeholders to engage and have their voices heard as Santa Fe ISD prepares for the start of the 2018-19 school year.

### **Santa Fe ISD Police Department increases full-time staff to 14 officers, 10 part-time officers, and five campus security assistants for the 2018-19 school year**

- *Increased security presence* on all campuses when students and staff return in August with the addition of five full-time officers, five part-time officers, and five full-time campus security assistants.
- *Purchased new security equipment* to fully equip all new officers with items that include: weapons, vehicles, safety vests, radios, Taser guns, etc.

### **Safety and security measures put in place and others planned to be implemented by August 20 include:**

- *Redesigning and modifying the High School:* Options have been presented for reconstruction and renovation of the affected areas of the high school.
- *Changing door locks and reconfiguring alarm systems:* The current door locks are being changed and the alarm system reconfigured to include panic buttons.
- *Implementing exterior electronic door-locking alarm notification systems* at all schools.
- *Added four new counselors:* As a result of a state grant, SFISD is adding additional counselors to the high school staff in order to focus on behavioral and mental health concerns. School counselors should have more time to devote to the mental health needs of students. In addition to academic counseling, there is a need to ensure counselors are trained to and available to focus on behavioral and mental health issues.
- *Additional perimeter fencing* at elementary schools.
- *Added security in schools:* The additional Santa Fe ISD Police Department police officers and campus security assistants will be providing increased security monitoring in hallways, door entries and student supervision.
- *Comprehensive Training for SFISD Police Officers:* All SFISD police officers receive ongoing ALERRT Level One and Two training; fire arms training; secure weapon and rifle training; participate in drills with all campuses and provide training on District crisis management to all staff.

- *Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) training for the public:* SFISD police officers provide CRASE training for the public, which is designed and built on the Avoid, Deny, Defend (ADD) strategy developed by ALERRT in 2004. CRASE training provides strategies, guidance and a proven plan for surviving an active shooter event.
- *Improved student supervision and training:* Organized student supervision is one of the most reliable ways to prevent accidents and injuries. Improved student supervision reduces the risks of incidents on playgrounds, pedestrian and vehicle accidents, medical emergencies, or acts of violence. Effective student supervision and training also reduces a major crisis. Our Santa Fe ISD Police Department trains all its staff and students in safety procedures in major crisis events such as an active shooter incident, fire or tornado. The District has also established consistent practices to keep unoccupied rooms locked when an adult is not present to better supervise students and prevent safety incidents.
- *Securing access to schools:* Secured entrances on all campuses and within all departments ensures that visitors must check in with a receptionist and show proof of identity. They are then processed through the Raptor school security system before they gain entrance for meetings, campus visits, etc.

### **Improved District Communications and Emergency Management Protocols for the 2018-19 school year**

The District Emergency Management Protocols have been using important communications tools, such as the School Messenger and Skyward notification services, used by the nation's leading school systems to connect with parents, students and staff with features that include: voice, SMS text, email and social media. The District has been using voice, email and social media. Some of the improvements for the 2018-19 school year include:

- *Implementing* SMS text as an additional emergency notification option.
- *Providing* a new District Emergency Management Protocols tab on the Emergency Safety Information webpage to provide emergency safety communications protocols. Previously, there was only a School Closing Procedures tab, due to inclement weather or hazardous driving conditions. The Emergency Safety Information icon is located on the right toolbar on the SFISD homepage.
- *Requiring* all Santa Fe ISD employees and substitutes to complete the Safe Schools training system for all federal, state and local mandated employee compliance training before school starts. The sessions in this training include: Active Shooter, Bullying Recognition and Response, Crisis Response and Recovery, and others. Training is available in both English and Spanish for all employees.
- *Providing* the Stop the Bleed safety training to teachers, coaches and nurses in our schools this summer. Stop the Bleed is a Homeland Security national awareness campaign intended to cultivate grassroots efforts that encourage bystanders to become trained, equipped, and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives.
- *Reviewing* the use of social media monitoring software and applications to provide an anonymous tips hotline for students to report suspected illegal activities or concerns that involve our schools.

- *Increasing* participation in and visibility of the SFISD PD Parent on Patrol Squad (POPS) program. POPS is a volunteer program designed to involve parents, grandparents and other relatives, to volunteer their time to assist school district police officers on their respective SFISD campuses.

**Ongoing work of the Santa Fe Strong Safety and Security Committee**

As best practices evolve over time, the Santa Fe Strong Safety & Security Committee shall remain in an advisory capacity as the safety and security of our students and staff continues to be our top priority! And, all along the journey, we want you to continue to actively engage with Santa Fe ISD as valued partners to help us best serve each of our students. I truly appreciate your continued efforts to support and work with us to protect our students and staff as we plan for the immediate school year and beyond.

*United together, we are Santa Fe Strong!*

Dr. Leigh Wall  
Superintendent of Schools  
Santa Fe ISD