

Tri-City CUSD #1

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February 28, 2018

Dear Tri-City Parents, Students, and Staff:

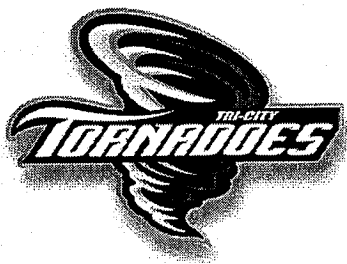
It has been a difficult few weeks for school districts across the country. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those affected by the tragic situation in Parkland, Florida. I want to reassure you that the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff have been and will remain our top priority.

Last week a **"Safety Announcement"** was posted on the district's website, Facebook pages, and is attached at the end of this letter. In addition to that announcement, I want to address the following:

Social Media and Threats: Several area school districts have been subjected to threats on social media or from rumors in their schools since the Florida incident. We take all threats seriously and investigate them, along with local authorities, to determine credibility. Students are reminded to "think before you post" on social media. I would remind students to "say something, if you see something" as we are all in this together. Students making threats will face disciplinary action.

Gun-Free Zone: By law, schools are gun-free zones meaning that it is against the law to carry guns on school grounds or into our school except for law enforcement officers. School policy also prohibits BB guns, airsoft guns, paint ball guns, toy guns, or any look-alike from being brought to school, as they are difficult to distinguish from real guns. Violations of gun laws and school policies will cause disciplinary action as well as law enforcement being involved.

Demonstrations and Walk-Outs: We are aware of several nationally organized student walk-outs being discussed on social media across the country to protest gun laws and school violence. Some may call for students and staff to walk out of school at 10:00 am on March 14 and April 20. This movement may gain momentum at high schools across the country. As a school district, we can't sanction such protests since the district has heightened concerns about the safety of our students. Furthermore, we remain concerned about our children's mental and physical safety. Elementary aged children are not equipped to understand such events.



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Their participation could lead to additional fear and helplessness. It would be impossible to supervise and adequately protect our students from potential harm if they leave the building or school property during an event such as this.

After Hours – Who Do You Call? After school hours, if you see or hear something that is a threat to school safety, please contact 911 (emergency). If you feel it isn't at the level of a threat, but needs reported immediately please call (217) 753-6666 (non-emergency). Sangamon County dispatch will make the proper notifications.

Student Mental Health and Well-Being: Our students, staff, and administrators are concerned about the well-being of every student in our schools. We want all of our students to have a connection with someone inside or outside of the classroom. These connections could be a teacher, aide, secretary, coach, bus driver, cook, custodian, friend, or administrator. If you are a student or you know a student who needs assistance, please contact our principals.

We know, because of the world we live in today, the scenario that happened in Florida could happen anywhere. Please know that, as a parent and educator, these are not easy times for any of us. I would ask that we all work together to continue to create a safe and positive learning environment for our children. All of us play a vital role in staying engaged and reporting any concerns to the proper authorities.

Educationally yours,

Jill Larson, Superintendent

The Tri-City School Board and school leadership recognizes an increase in questions about school security and safety. Here are highlights of the proactive actions Tri-City has already been doing and ways parents, students, and our community can help.

On-going at Tri-City:

- Entry access (main door of elementary and JH/HS) is managed and controlled inside by school personnel; all secondary entries are locked down during the course of the day.
- Local law enforcement attempt to have a daily presence in the buildings.
- A recent active shooter drill has occurred with local, Sangamon County law enforcement and fire departments.
- All Tri-City staff continue to be educated on school safety.
- Communication devices (phones and radios) are acquired and regularly evaluated within to ensure they can easily communicate with first responders.
- At least annually, a safety review meeting is conducted. This includes emergency and crisis response plans, protocols, and procedures.
- School safety drills occur annually, with at least: three school evacuation drills (fire); one school bus evacuation drill; one severe weather drill; and one law enforcement drill (active shooter).
- Continuously improving internal policies and communications with parents, teachers, students, and community.

How can you help?

- Be patient as we required doors to be buzzed open and office check-ins for all visitors.
- Keep your eyes open for any concerning behavior before, during, and after school.
- Encourage your child to report any concerns to school personnel.
- If you see something, say something.
- Discuss school and community safety with your children, family, and neighbors.

The *American School Counselor Association* recommends that parents and adults:

- Listen to your children's fears and concerns.
- Limit exposure to television and social media.
- Reassure children that the world is a good place, but there are people who do bad things.
- Remind children that we have drills and procedures in place to keep them safe.

It takes all of us to help Tri-City students have a great day, every day.

Contact Information:

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