

Washtenaw Superintendents' Association

Ann Arbor Public Schools □ Chelsea Schools □ Dexter Community Schools
Lincoln Consolidated Schools □ Manchester Community Schools □ Milan Area Schools
Saline Area Schools □ Washtenaw ISD □ Whitmore Lake Public Schools
Ypsilanti Community Schools

February 2018

Dear Families and Community Members:

Incomprehensible. We are stunned, grieved, and angry that yet another troubled shooter has targeted students and staff in this week's school shooting in Florida. Our thoughts are with the Broward County school community as they comfort and support one another through this senseless and cowardly act of violence.

It has been 19 years since the Columbine school massacre in Colorado. In what may have been considered an isolated occurrence, we now realize that an Amish school in Pennsylvania or an elementary school, snuggled in a quiet community in Connecticut, can be targets for these reprehensible acts. The school districts in Washtenaw County and local law enforcement agencies mobilized in 2013 to merge security efforts and work collaboratively to ensure that our schools are prepared for a building intruder.

One of the largest undertakings in this collaborative work was training all staff in the active shooter response method called ALICE (Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate). Since the inception, we have continued to offer on-going courses for new staff and those who wish to have a refresher course. We have also produced ALICE lesson plans for teachers to instruct their students in how to respond if an active shooter enters their school. In addition to staff training, Washtenaw ISD pursued and received a \$500,000 grant from the Michigan State Police. All districts across the county were given a portion of the grant funds to purchase safety devices for their schools.

The Washtenaw ISD also has a strong alliance with Washtenaw County Community Mental Health. The agency has been instrumental in hosting forums to help educate staff and families on ways to recognize signs, intervene, and access resources when something may be amiss with a student. For 24-hour help, please call 734-544-3050.

School safety requires all of us to be alert: staff, parents, students, and the larger community. If you see behavior in a student or resident that seems suspicious and you don't feel comfortable approaching school personnel or police, please consider using the OK2SAY app/website, an anonymous tip line. Since inception in 2014, OK2SAY has received over 10,000 tips, preventing multiple tragedies, including planned school attacks and student suicide. OK2SAY is confidential and available 24/7. To report a concern, please call 1-855-565-2729, text 652729, email ok2say@mi.gov, or visit their website www.mi.gov/ok2say.

As your school leaders, we are committed to doing everything possible to keep our students and staff safe while they are in the learning/work environment. We are stronger and safer when we work together.

Sincerely,

The Washtenaw Superintendents' Association