

KESHEQUA CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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February 16, 2017

Dear Families,

The hearts, thoughts, and prayers of all members of the Keshequa community go out to the students, families and entire community of Parkland, Florida as another senseless, catastrophic, and life altering tragedy comes to a school setting. The scenes playing on our news over the last forty-eight hours shake me to my core as I envision, contemplate, and yes, worry about the question, what if that was Keshequa?

Depending on the news source you encounter, numbers of school shootings range from 25 fatal active shootings at elementary and high schools since 1999(1) to nearly 300 school shootings since 2013 - an average of nearly one per week (2). However, it doesn't matter what the official count is, we all can agree that even one is one too many! The stark and troubling reality is that school shootings do occur and we cannot take it for granted that it could never happen in Keshequa.

So, what are we proactively doing to put in place preventative measures to counteract this unspeakable trend from coming to our community?

- First and foremost, all school personnel is currently and will continue to do everything we possibly can to build positive, productive, and nurturing relationships with every student each day. While we recognize that no system or human being is perfect, we will remain committed to doing just that. At the same time we will seek additional ways to build, maintain, and strengthen relationships with and among our students; acknowledging that there will be instances when restorative measures are needed to rebuild relationships.
- Each of our building teams, consistently focus on identifying strategies to foster social and emotional learning, to support student mental health, and to ensure that students are connected with at least one caring adult. We will always work to promote protective factors and build coping skills to strengthen resiliency within our students.
- We continue to monitor, practice, and improve our safety and security as district safety teams meet to ensure we continuously improve our collective efforts. We will utilize state funding to upgrade our security surveillance systems to better monitor the daily interactions within our buildings and across our campus. In our upcoming capital project, which you will hear more about in the coming months, among other safety enhancements, we are reconfiguring the High School Main Entrance to take additional precautionary steps to secure the building with a single point of entry and limit initial access of visitors.

1 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/02/15/fox-news-anchor-shepard-smith-emotionally-lists-all-25-fatal-school-shootings-since-columbine/340108002/>

2 https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/school-shootings-2018_us_5a68586de4b002283007ef83

These measures in themselves will enhance the safety of our students, but in truth, the safety of our children must be a community effort. There are steps you can take at home that will help all of us provide for a safer environment for everyone at school.

- Please have open conversations with your children about their worries, anxieties, and thoughts related to their sense of safety, security, and overall wellness in our schools. As you think about how that conversation may unfold, please consider the recommendations from the National Association of School Psychologists - <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-andcrisis/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers>. If you need assistance or support, please reach out by contacting your child's principal or school counselor.
- Please, encourage your children to express concerns that they might have about friends and classmates, either to you or to a trusted school staff member. We are not asking students to "tattle" or "rat" on friends, but it is critical that any student reach out to ask for help in supporting a friend or classmate that may be in trouble or contemplating doing harm to themselves or others. Again, you can reach out to our building principals, counselors, or a trusted school staff member.
- If your parental instincts tell you that there may be something of concern, it is important for you to know that there is no such thing as an overreaction in reporting concerns. If you hear, see, or read anything, anything that doesn't seem to be right, please report it! One more, you can reach out to our building principals, counselors, or a trusted staff member.
- If at any time any concern or information imminently threatens the health and safety of anyone, please call 911. Thank you for making the time to consider how we can partner to keep our community a safe place for children to learn and grow in positive and productive ways. While tragedies can happen anywhere, it is only through our collective efforts in remaining vigilant, in our willingness to report concerns, and in our commitment to proactively support and challenge everyone to be their very best selves each and every day that we maintain a chance at limiting our risk to a tragedy coming to our community.

With a heavy heart,

Thomas K. Kopp
Superintendent

Primary Principal – Kristina Mileham 468-2900 - Ext. 6136
Intermediate School Principal – Ami Hunt: 468-2900 - Ext.2017
High School Principal – Peter Reynolds: 468-2900 – Ext. 2017
Assistant Principal - Bradley Lehman: 468-2900 – Ext. 2012