



Greetings FSD Staff & Families,

This week, school communities in Denver and Nashville are dealing with the aftermath of senseless violence. We send our sincerest thoughts to both communities and sympathy for the loss of life in Nashville.

The tragic news of gun violence in our schools feels all too common in our country. When these unthinkable acts of violence take place in our nation's schools, no matter how far from or close to home, it is devastating and heartbreaking. Please know that the safety of our students and staff remains a top priority for FSD 145. As a district, FSD is continually working to ensure that we are implementing and utilizing the most efficient safety protocols and procedures in our schools and district buildings. One of the important directives that we received this year from the FSD145 from the Board of Education was to review our School Safety Plan to ensure that it is updated and relevant to our current realities.

As a result, Freeport School District conducted a comprehensive school safety review in the beginning of the school year and presented its updated plan at the February 21, 2023 board meeting. The ultimate goals were to ensure that school safety is essential in creating and impacting a positive learning environment; preventing and addressing harmful behaviors; and preparing for emergencies.

The Safety Plan Review Team identified six key areas to review: school culture, emergency preparedness, safety drills, physical security measures, visitor management process, and behavior threat assessment.

To better understand the **school culture**, FSD145 uses data from several survey tools such as Panorama and the 5 Essentials that assess school culture and students' social and emotional needs. FSD145 has also implemented an anonymous tip line through our partnership with Gaggle.

Next, the team reviewed **Emergency and Crisis Response** plans. The school district worked with local law enforcement, fire departments, and other emergency services to ensure that the schools were ready for a wide range of potential emergencies, including natural disasters, fires, and active shooter situations. The schools are required to maintain up-to-date emergency kits and develop clear evacuation plans.

**Safety drills** were another essential aspect of the review. Annual fire, bus evacuation, lockdown (active shooter), and severe weather drills are conducted by all schools. These drills help students and staff to become familiar with the proper procedures and provide opportunities for

valuable feedback. These drills are documented and submitted to the Regional Office of Education (ROE 8).

The Building and Grounds Department reviewed **physical security measures**. The district will install new surveillance cameras in all elementary buildings. We will update secure door access systems and improve exterior lighting where necessary. The schools will implement a visitor's single point of entry during school hours. In addition, we are looking into future considerations for metal detectors and school alarm systems.

The Safety Team will refine the **visitor management process** to ensure that all school visitors are adequately vetted and monitored. Upon arrival, schools will require guests to provide identification, sign in, and always wear a visible visitor badge. Staff members are trained to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter when the school security and/or secretary is requiring you to show your identification prior to entering the building.

Finally, **behavior threat assessment teams** have been established to identify and address potential threats to the school community. A multidisciplinary team, including school counselors, psychologists, and administrators, was formed to evaluate and manage concerns. This proactive approach allows the schools to identify and intervene in potentially dangerous situations before they escalate. The team also works closely with the Freeport Police Department for follow up home visits and assessing credibility of threats.

Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand. We want to make sure that we are taking a proactive approach against school violence beginning with ourselves. We know that stress can take a physical and emotional toll on both students and adults and a supportive school climate makes a huge difference on how we cope with tragedy within and outside of our community.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at 815-232-0300.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Anna Alvarado,*

Superintendent of Schools