

March 7, 2018

Dear Parents and Community Members:

I am completing my second week as Dothan City School Superintendent. Thank you for the well-wishes and willingness to share information about the history of the city and school system. If I have not met you, I look forward to doing so over the next few weeks. My first ten days have been extremely busy.

Obviously, we are all on high alert due to very real concerns about school safety. Prior to my arrival here in Dothan, I spoke at length with the Chief of Police of Dothan. Last Friday, I was pleased to attend a meeting with him, the Mayor and the School Board Chair about the topic of school safety. The number 1 priority is keeping your child safe. The city leaders share this concern. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, the Chief will address our Principals and Directors.

This week we had two threats, in both instances, the schools were put on soft lockdown, police were called, and staff took the right steps. Please know that I take any threat seriously and feel very strongly that if a student is found to make any such threats, the most serious consequences will be applied.

Threats on my watch have been investigated. I am in contact with the police, and the Principals work closely with investigating officers. With their help, two recent threats were solved. Any child who makes such threats will not be allowed to remain in school.

I know you want to help the schools to remain safe. Please start by having a serious conversation with your child. We all need to be aware. If we see something, say something immediately. This includes Social Media. Please monitor your child on Social Media. The Code of Student Conduct will be approved within the month. I encourage you to go over the document. Please share any comments with Mr. Scott Faulk at 334-793-1397 ext. 220.

I will be speaking with Principals next week to seek their ideas and also lay out steps we can take to keep strangers out. Some initial steps we are taking include asking the Police to conduct Threat Assessment Reviews at each school. This will show us the weaknesses of each campus and provide direction for us to follow. We will also work to conduct active shooter training within each school. I anticipate that we will hold a parent meeting in the near future to listen to your suggestions.

Some areas that we must consider for action include but are not limited to:

1. Making sure that only the front door is available for entry and with supervision.
2. Consider fencing around the schools.
3. Installing video/camera surveillance within the school and on the outside perimeter.
4. Keyless entry to schools with the use of card technology or biomedical means.
5. Increased services for mental health and counseling for our children and families.
6. Finally, more SRO's or trained officers in the schools.

It is no surprise that all of this will be expensive. I am sure you are aware that the schools do not have dollars of this sort. Hopefully, there will be resources from the state and the federal government but we will need your help to get the school system on even footing with safety and security. Funding is necessary for safety and security but we cannot forget our needs for our core mission of providing every student a high quality instructional environment.

Sincerely,



Dr. Phyllis Edwards, Superintendent  
Dothan City Schools

