

Dear Team Duval,

I'm sure that you are aware that our Florida school family, Broward County Schools, has been shaken by an unthinkable tragedy. Our sympathy and condolences go to the Broward community and particularly to the families, students and staff of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Please know that we are reaching out to their leadership to offer any practical support we can provide. Also, please be assured that we have implemented extensive safety procedures and protocols, and we will continue to be vigilant in our review and rehearsals to ensure we have the best possible response in the event of an emergency for the safety of both our students and employees.

Events such as these impact all school communities, including students, families, and staff. Please be alert for students or colleagues who might be struggling to process or cope with the natural impact that this news might have on our emotions. For students, please make the proper referrals based on your school's resources and if something more is needed, please work with your school leadership to ensure our students are exceptionally well supported. For you and your colleagues, I remind you that our Employee Assistance Program is available all day, every day. If you need support, I urge you to contact them and get the help that is freely available to you. That phone number is (904) 296-9436.

Teachers, your students in your class may bring this up. If so, your objective should be to address it in a developmentally appropriate way for the age of your students and return the class focus to normal instruction as quickly as possible. If the student is expressing something in a way that suggests a need for counseling or support, please make that referral as you normally would.

Events such as these also raise inevitable questions about our preparation. In this regard, please let me reiterate a message you have often heard: if you see something that might indicate a threat of harm to oneself or others – a behavior, a verbal expression, a social media post, an expression in a written assignment -- please bring that to the immediate attention of your principal or member of your administrative staff, school resource officer or the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Pre-emptive action is our very best defense against the threats posed in today's society. Remember: ***See something? Say something.***

Other questions we can expect will relate to specifics around security plans, protocols, and preventive measures. For very good and obvious reasons, our documentation is protected as confidential by Florida statute and is exempt from disclosure to the public. Answering specific questions or providing documentation would itself undermine our efforts to be safe. Please be cautious with respect to any question or request for this type of information and direct any request for security records or protocols to your school's administrative team.

As we work through this together, let us keep at the forefront of our thinking the needs of our students and families. Let us also be cognizant of the support we must give each other and be generous in that support. Let us also continue to keep our colleagues, friends, and family members in Broward County in our thoughts.

Thank you for all you continue to do for our children.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patricia S. Willis,
Superintendent
Duval County Public Schools