FAYETTE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION



Center of Innovation 440 Hood Avenue Fayetteville, Georgia 30214 (770) 716-1209 (770) 716-7457 FAX www.fcboe.org

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August, 2018

Dear Parents:

All of us are concerned about the safety of our families in these challenging times. In the Fayette County School System our top priority is protecting the safety of our students and staff. We want both our students and employees to feel physically and psychologically safe and cared for in our schools. As a school district, we promise to do everything reasonably possible to protect your children against any threat that may arise while they are in our care. I want to inform you of the things that we are doing to honor our commitment to ensure that our schools and children in them remain safe.

Our safety/security focus in on three things: Effective planning and coordination for potential emergency situations, training our staff and students and conducting drills to practice our plans, and strengthening our security technology and infrastructure. Our school system has spent considerable time and effort planning and practicing safety and security measures appropriate for dealing with major critical incidents. We continue to have very close relationship and strong lines of communication with our local law enforcement agencies, our first responders and the courts.

Entry into and exit from our schools are restricted using access control. Emergency communications continue to be upgraded in every school. Staff members wear photo identification badges. Parents and others coming into schools must check in at the main office and receive temporary identification badges before proceeding. We are exploring the possibility of installing networked visitor management systems in each of our schools. All adults who work with our students during and after school require background checks.

In an effort to improve our school climate, we are implementing the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program in all of our schools this year, ensuring that our students and staff feel engaged and connected. Our teachers and administrators are being trained in youth mental health first aid.

Every school has a crisis response plan and all school personnel have participated in crisis response training. These plans are reviewed and approved annually. In general, each plan involves the designation of a crisis management team, development of evacuation, shelter-in-place and lockdown procedures, maintenance of a portable critical response kit that contains key information and supplies, designation of one or more evacuation sites, provisions for updating the plan, and resources for external assistance before, during and after an event. Our Fayette County Public School (FCPS) plan is reviewed and approved by Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) and our Fayette County Emergency Management Director. Fire drills are conducted monthly and both severe weather and lockdown drills are conducted semi-annually. We have invited GEMA/HS to conduct a security survey of each of our schools and provide recommendations on improvements. We have surveyed thirteen schools already and will schedule more during the first semester of 2018.

We are currently forming a District Safety Committee with representatives of each school level (elementary, middle and high), key district staff members and representatives from local emergency management. We will develop goals and set priorities, review our plans and coordinate our resources in response to any emergency. School-based student support teams and safety teams support this process at their level. Trained School Resource Officers (SROs) are assigned full time to every high and middle school. This year the Fayette County Sheriff's Department has added a SRO in both Inman Elementary and North Fayette Elementary schools. The school system works closely with our local law enforcement agencies, county and city fire and emergency services, county emergency management agency and the Fayette County health department in order to be prepared to respond to any crisis.

Every school has a detailed plan for the reunification of parents and their children in the event of a major emergency. School psychologists, social workers, and counselors trained in crisis intervention are available to students and their families in all emergencies. We had the opportunity to practice this plan with the fifth graders from Crabapple Lane Elementary last May and we are applying the lessons we learned to our plans.

In an effort to provide timely, clear and accurate information to our parents and families in an emergency, FCPS will use the communication capabilities of our student information system (Infinite Campus), local radio and television stations and local newspapers, as well as Comcast Channel 24 and the FCPS website <u>www.fcboe.org</u>. It is critically important that family emergency contact information is up to date in Infinite Campus. Parents can update contact information through the parent portal (for help with updating your contact information in Infinite Campus, please contact your child's school). Since communication is a two-way process, we are encouraging everyone in our schools to communicate with us if they have a safety concern. If you *See Something or Hear Something* related to school safety, bullying, harassment or any potential unsafe situation, please *Say Something* by using the 24/7 Toll-free School Safety Hotline (1-877-SAY- STOP) or by reporting it to a school administrator or School Resource Officer.

For more information on emergency procedures and preparedness, please look at the <u>Emergency Preparedness</u> <u>FAQs</u> on this website.

Thank you for your continued support and for entrusting the safety of your children to us.

Sincerely,

Ted Lombard, Ed.D. Coordinator for Safety and Discipline