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Where Excellence and Creativity Merge

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October 16, 2019

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 assuring 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 is on three things: Effective planning, physical security and coordination with local emergency responders for potential emergency situations. This includes 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 a very close relationship and strong lines of communication with our local law enforcement agencies, our first responders and the courts.

Every school has an Emergency Response Plan and all school personnel have participated in crisis response training. These plans have been reviewed and are 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) Emergency Plan is reviewed by the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) and approved by our Fayette County Emergency Management Director. Fire drills are conducted monthly and both severe weather and lockdown drills are conducted semi-annually. GEMA/HS conducted a comprehensive security survey of each of our schools and provided recommendations on improvements. We have used the results of these surveys to prioritize budgeting for improvements at each school.

Entry into our schools is restricted using access control and security vestibules. 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, check in through the Check Mate Visitor Management System and receive temporary identification badges before proceeding. All adults who work with our students during and after school require background checks.

In an effort to improve our school climate we have implemented the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program in all of our schools, ensuring that our students and staff feel engaged and connected. Our teachers and administrators are also being trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

We have formed a District Safety Committee with representatives at each school level (elementary, middle and high), key district staff members and representatives from local emergency management. We have developed goals and set priorities, reviewed our plans and are coordinating 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. Additionally, the Fayette County Sheriff's Department has added an 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, our county emergency management agency and the Fayette County Health Department in order to be prepared to mitigate and 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 that would require the evacuation of a school. 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 7th graders from J.C. Booth Middle School 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 our website www.fcboe.org. 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, contact your 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.

What can you do to help keep our students safe? Start by talking to your child about safety issues and empower them to talk about their concerns and express their feelings. Communicate with your children's schools about what they are doing at their schools and get involved with building a positive school climate. The following website can provide some ideas on how to do this: <https://www.mhanational.org/talking-kids-about-school-safety>. For more information on emergency procedures and preparedness, please look at the Emergency Preparedness FAQs on this webpage.

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