

Superintendents Assure Parents, Share Resources in Wake of Florida School Shooting

(Crystal A. Proxmire, Feb. 15, 2018)

Clarkston, Farmington, Ferndale, Madison Heights, MI – Wednesday's [shooting in Parkland Florida](#) left 17 people dead. It also left parents and school administrators across the country with a painful reminder of the need to keep students safe.

“When tragedies like yesterday’s unspeakable events in Parkland, Florida occur, our thoughts immediately turn to the questions: how could this have been prevented? How can we ensure safety and security in our schools?” said Clarkston Schools Interim Superintendent Shawn Ryan in a message to parents Thursday. “These questions keep me up at night.”

Dr. Dania H. Bazzi, Superintendent of Ferndale Schools, also sent a message to the community. “As the parent of two young children myself, I know that events like yesterday cause us all to reflect on our own schools and to question their safety. I can assure you that Ferndale Schools, in partnership with the local police departments of Ferndale, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, as well as the Michigan State Police, are taking every precaution to ensure the safety of our students,” she said.

PHYSICAL SAFETY

School districts through Oakland County work with local police and Oakland County Sheriff’s Office to prepare for emergency situations, including active shooters. Following the Dec. 2012 shooting at [Sandy Hook Elementary](#) in Newtown, Connecticut, Oakland County began training officers from various departments so they could easily work together in active shooter situations. (For video and story on the 2013 training [CLICK HERE](#).)

Generally as school districts have been asking voters to approve bonds over the past few years, enhancing security at school facilities have been included.

In Clarkston, improvements to buildings came along with the passing of a bond in 2016. “This includes new, secure entries

which have already been constructed at Andersonville and Bailey Lake Elementary Schools and all other elementary buildings and Clarkston Junior High School will follow this summer. We also have installed upgraded surveillance and communication systems for additional layers of security in and around our campuses,” Ryan said.

In addition to coordinated training with Oakland County, Ryan said that “A district crisis team also meets with law enforcement and emergency responders on an ongoing basis to discuss new standards and practices, and we are working to plan a simulation for multiple districts to be trained later this year. Regularly scheduled lockdown and evacuation drills are also conducted in each building with students and staff.”

Farmington Superintendent Dr. George C. Heitsch shared security measures in his statement to parents. “Over the years, we have developed security measures to help ensure a safe and secure environment,” he said. “Several years ago, we instituted a secure entry procedure within all of our schools. In order to enter during the school day, a person must be “buzzed” into the school. As we’ve done bond improvements, this entry procedure has been improved to ensure direct access into the office upon entry. Another project associated with the bond is the installation of high-quality video surveillance throughout our secondary schools. Additionally, throughout the District, our staff must carry identification badges which function as electronic keys, helping to maintain limited access to our schools. Finally, as part of bond renovations, “panic” buttons were added that communicate immediately with law enforcement in the event of an emergency.”

STUDENT SUPPORT AND PREVENTION

“Our children need to feel safe and supported at school,” Bazzi said. “The Ferndale School family ensures that natural conversations occur within the classroom and if individuals need additional support they have access to a social worker, counselor, and administrators. We will continue to share tips and ideas with our staff members on how to respond and hold

discussions around topics of violence and tragedy in an age appropriate manner.”

Ryan shared similar sentiments. “The emotional health of our students is also critical. I’ve shared some of the efforts we’ve made to better recognize distress in students. This includes a focus on addressing the warning signs of troublesome behaviors through student threat assessments, continued staff training, and more. Beyond that, we must continue to insist on a culture of kindness and compassion in Clarkston.”

Statewide there is a program called Ok2Say.

Bazzi explained, “If you or your student are aware of any threats or potentially dangerous activity please do not hesitate to contact local law enforcement. Ferndale Schools also participates in the “OK 2 SAY” program allowing parents, students, and community members to anonymously report concerns 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through multiple means:

CALL: [1-855-565-2729](tel:1-855-565-2729)

TEXT: 652729

E-MAIL: ok2say@mi.gov

Get the APP for Android iPhone

WEBSITE: www.mi.gov/ok2say

With these confidential tools, the State of Michigan is empowering its citizens to work together to keep our schools, students and communities safer.”

Superintendent Randy Speck of Madison District encouraged awareness. “In light of yesterday’s tragedy in Florida, I want to let you know all Madison District Public Schools are currently reviewing safety and security procedures. I have directed building administrators to go over these procedures with students and staff.

“This is an opportunity to ensure we are doing everything in our power to create and maintain a safe learning environment for your student and the many people who support our students. This is also an opportunity to remind parents and students to be vigilant and aware of their environment both outside of school and online. Please remind your children that

if they are ever in a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable for any reason that they must tell an adult and that the school should be notified of any concerns as soon as possible.”

Farmington Schools shared a list of links for parents and teachers:

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

-Get resources for helping students in the aftermath of a shooting

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/shooting-resources>

-Get resources for helping students deal with troubling issues in the news

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/helping-students-troubling-times>

[PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org)

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/news/>

Talking With Kids About the News

The Child Mind Institute

How to Help Children Cope With Frightening News

<https://childmind.org/article/helping-children-cope-frightening-news/>

Other districts have shared information and sentiments as well. Check out your local district’s website or social media page if they are not included in this story.

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