



Safety and Security Update Narration with Superintendent Robert Shaner

April 27, 2018

I am Robert Shaner, Superintendent of the Rochester Community School District. I'm also a husband and father of three beautiful children, ages 10, 14, and 16. The well-being of my family, whether it be work or personal, is always my primary concern.

The recent threats and acts of school violence reported in the news have caused tension and heightened fears across the country as we parents worry about our children's safety. At Rochester Community Schools, we take the safety of our students and staff very seriously. Protecting our family is our top priority. Our children are our most precious possessions, and we would never put them in harm's way.

One of the most frequently asked questions we receive from community members is:

"What are you doing to keep our children safe at school?"

The district convenes its Critical Incident Team and consults with safety experts on a regular basis to continue to enhance our daily operating procedures. These procedures ensure that:

- All visitors must enter through the main entrance using the visitor verification system. Guests are required to show picture ID and sign-in, documenting their name, time in and out, and purpose of the visit. Staff, students, and guests should never open a door for other visitors.
- All exterior doors will be locked throughout the school day. If staff or a community member notices a door that has been propped open for any reason, they should close the door and report the incident to the front office immediately.
- All interior classroom doors will be locked at all times.
- All exits and hallways will be clear of desks, material, and debris so as to allow for a quick exit in the case of an emergency.

Throughout the school year, each school conducts drills during both structured and unstructured times. Drills are observed by our school liaison officers. They include, at a minimum, three lockdown/shelter-in-place drills, five fire drills, and two tornado drills.

I recently joined our school liaison officers for a professional development session regarding lockdown procedures and reviewed a training video that was produced by Officer Amy Drehmer. Although our liaison officers and members of their respective departments feel that our current lockdown protocols reflect the latest recommended tactics, we have been informed that the liaison officers will be undergoing ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) training in late April. ALICE training prepares individuals and organizations to handle threats involving an aggressive intruder. After the liaison officers receive training, we will be working closely with them to ensure our school staff is appropriately trained as well.

The district is also spending \$6 million through the bond efforts to enhance safety and security. Efforts include:

- Redesigning the main building entrances, and providing staff with a better visitor verification system and building lockdown capabilities.

- Adding locks that latch from the interior side of the classroom door and installing video surveillance cameras in the schools and on buses.
- Updating the districtwide telephone system and PA system will also ensure proper notification and warning during an emergency.

Another frequently asked question is: **“What makes a threat credible or not?”**

Our school community is fortunate to have a close working relationship with the Rochester Police Department, the Oakland County Sheriff’s Office, our security consultants, and liaison officers who provide us with the necessary guidance to determine whether a threat is credible or not.

Depending on the type of threat, law enforcement uses various techniques to determine if a threat is credible or not. I’m sure you can understand that for safety reasons, we’ve been asked by law enforcement not to share the information about these techniques publically.

What we can tell you, though, that all threats are considered serious until proven otherwise. When a written or verbal threat is made in a building, school administrators work with law enforcement to verify the information and review the facts. During the investigation, we may conduct interviews, sweep the building, and review available camera footage. Based on our investigation and the viability of the threat, our community may experience increased security precautions such as additional police presence and random searches of backpacks and bags. On rare occasions, it may become necessary to cancel school. This decision will be made based on the advice of our local law enforcement team.

The Oakland County Sheriff’s Office is one of the largest in the nation and our deputies bring a breadth of knowledge and experience second to none. We have every confidence in their abilities to keep our community safe.

Another frequently asked question is, **“Is making a false threat a crime?”**

I would like to read a statement on School Safety and Threats from the County of Oakland Office of the Sheriff, Michael Bouchard, dated April 26, 2018.

Sheriff Bouchard writes:

We are currently being faced with an increasing volume of school threats across Oakland County and our nation. The Sheriff’s Office will take every threat seriously, investigate every individual, determine whether it is a real pending threat or threatening statement, and we will seek charges in all cases. The charges associated with making threats whether with malicious intentions or in jest, are extremely serious and depending on the circumstances can lead up to a charge of making Terroristic Threats which carries a 20 year felony. Both the Sheriff’s Office and the Prosecutor’s Office will continue to work in conjunction with Rochester Community Schools to ensure the safety of students, teachers, and staff. Our partnership with the school district is hand in glove on this issue.

Our school resource officers will continue to be involved and look for ways to improve safety and security at our schools. I am currently involved in getting legislation passed at both the state and federal level which will bring more resources and funding to harden schools and help create proactive safety policies for all school districts. Every student deserves an opportunity to attend school in a secure, productive, and safe environment and I am committed along with our Rochester Hills Substation to make sure we provide this safe space. These threats are not a joke and no matter how they are conveyed – whether by social media, phone call, or written – it will be investigated and appropriate charges will be sought.

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All members of our school community should be able to experience an environment where they feel safe, valued and respected. As such, the Rochester Community School District is prepared to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law anyone associated with school violence, threats of school violence, or the malicious destruction of school property.

I encourage all parents or guardians to talk to their son or daughter. Making threats of violence can have serious consequences that could change their child's life and your family forever.

We also encourage students to talk to a trusted adult if they see or hear something that doesn't seem right. They can also anonymously report information using OK2SAY.

At Rochester Community Schools, we believe that family, school, business, and community partnerships are integral for student success. We thank our community members for their deep concern and support in working with us to keep our children safe. I am confident that, together, we can continue to maintain an environment where our children feel a sense of love and belonging and that our school buildings remain a source of hope and inspiration.

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