



GILROY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Superintendent's Office

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SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Deborah A. Flores, Ph.D.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Heather Bass ♦ B.C. Doyle ♦ Mark Good ♦ Patricia Midtgaard
James E. Pace ♦ Linda Piceno ♦ Jaime Rosso

March 8, 2018

Dear Gilroy Unified School District Parents,

Our hearts continue to grieve for the victims and families impacted during the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida last month. Seventeen lives were lost and many others were injured by the shooter, a former student. There have been far too many instances of violence in schools across the country and we understand the concerns being expressed about school safety across the nation.

We want you to know that in the Gilroy Unified School District, we are dedicated to providing students with a safe and supportive place to learn and grow. We have made school safety a top priority for a number of years and have been working closely with our local subject matter experts, the Gilroy Police and Fire Departments. As a result of this great partnership and thanks to Measure P funds, many proactive steps have been taken to keep our students and staff safe. These include installation of fences around every school, creating a single point of entry during school hours, installing state of the art locks, updating the procedures for entry into our buildings, regularly performing safety drills, training staff in the Run Hide Defend protocol, and annually updating school safety plans. We have met and conferred with police and fire since the Florida school shooting and are taking additional steps to enhance our preparedness.

It is abundantly clear from the amount of media coverage, social commentary, legislative efforts, civic demonstrations, and other outpourings of support that many Americans are determined to take steps to reduce school shootings. We are aware of demonstrations (walkouts, sit-ins, marches, etc.) being planned for *Wednesday, March 14* and *Friday, April 20, 2018*. Our priority is to keep students focused on learning and to maintain a safe environment. Please note, ***Gilroy's students are not permitted to participate in any activity that would interfere with the academic program or schedule.*** Students who choose to participate in any demonstration off-site during school hours must have a parent or guardian sign them out at the front office and they will be considered absent for that period of time. Administrators will work with students who wish to organize events on campus during non-class time to show their support for the national movement to make schools safe.

The school district performs monthly mandatory safety drills that not only teach our students what to do in an emergency at school, but also gives them life skills that can be used outside of our classrooms. Please talk to your children about what they are practicing and create an emergency preparedness plan for your family. You may wish to access resources available on the FEMA website at www.ready.gov/make-a-plan . Also, you may wish to read an article about how to talk to your child about school violence which can be accessed at: www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/talking-to-children-about-violence-for-parents-and-teachers.

The Gilroy Unified School District has its own Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and regularly tests its capabilities and function. The District has tools to keep parents informed during an emergency. In order for us to communicate with you during an emergency, it is very important that your contact information be accurate and up-to-date. If you have not received phone messages and/or emails from your school this year, please contact your school to update your contact information. We encourage you to sign up for *AlertSCC* at www.sccgov.org/sites/alertscc which is the emergency communications system used by our county.

Finally, we encourage our entire community to report anything suspicious or out of the ordinary to the school principal or to the Gilroy Police Department e.g. a change in behavior, references to guns or weapons, unsettling posts on social media, or signs of anxiety or depression. Information puts us in a position of strength and helps us to address any potential danger in a proactive manner that is best for our entire school community.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah A. Flores".

Deborah A. Flores, Ph.D.
Superintendent