



WESTPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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Dear Westport Community Parents/Guardians:

As many of you know, a tragic school shooting occurred yesterday at Oxford High School in Oxford, Michigan, where four teenagers were killed and seven others were injured. And while we wait to hear the suspect's motive in an attempt to understand what is unfathomable, the harsh reality that we face today is that the proliferation of guns in our country, coupled with a dramatic rise in psychological problems faced by our young people and families, will, unfortunately, result in more school shootings in the future. And while our school district has focused extensively on the ongoing Covid pandemic and mitigation strategies to keep our school students, staff, and visitors safe since March 2020, we have also continued with our planning and staff training to prevent school violence. To this end, the district, working with community leaders, has taken steps to keep our students and staff as safe from violent acts as possible.

For example, the district and school leaders met with representatives from both the Westport Fire and Police departments in September 2021. The result of the meeting was as follows:

- Our district leadership edited our *Emergency Response Guide* in September based on suggestions from our police and fire department partners.
- The A.L.I.C.E. protocols used nationwide to prevent or mitigate injuries resulting from school violence continue at Westport. Assistant Principal Sean Persico is working with Patrolman Scott Davis, our school resource officer, to plan future safety training at our Community Schools.
- In October, data analysis on targeted school violence episodes in the United States from 2008 to 2017 was reviewed by school leadership. It will be shared with staff to proactively identify possible student behaviors that lead to violent episodes, with the hope of implementing strategies to mitigate or eliminate these behaviors.
- The Westport Board of Selectman, working with the Westport Highway, Fire, Police, and School departments, have approved an additional emergency access road to allow for the faster entrance of safety vehicles at our Middle-High School, as well as our Westport Elementary School.

Of course, equally important in the prevention of violence at schools is our students and their families. A case in point is the use of unsecured weapons nationally in school shootings. According to the Giffords Law Center, most weapons used in school shootings are obtained by the assailant(s) due to improper storage. As many gun owners live in Westport, we ask that gun-owning families review their weapon storage practices to secure weapons. Additionally, the United States Secret Service published in the **2021 National Threat Assessment** that all potential school attackers exhibited concerning behaviors before executing their schemes. Further, most attackers communicated through various means their intent to attack. Consequently, the practice of "see something, say something" is essential to provide necessary lines of communication between families and schools to keep all safe.

As we mourn for the victims and families of this horrible shooting, we want our families and friends to know that we are here to help in any way we can to ensure the safety of all who enter the halls of our Community Schools. In doing so, we cannot achieve this without your help. Speaking to your children about the importance of "see something, say something" has never been more salient. Furthermore, if you are struggling as a parent or guardian, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

Thomas Aubin
Superintendent of Schools

It is the policy of the Westport Community Schools to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from harassment, violence or discrimination based on actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex/gender, marital status, homelessness, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, family care leave status, pregnancy or any condition related to pregnancy, or military/veteran status.