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Superintendent Rundle Safety Message To MISD Community

1 message

Superintendent Fred Rundle <communications@mercerislandschools.org>

Mon, Aug 1, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Reply-To: communications@mercerislandschools.org

To: Ian.Henry@mercerislandschools.org



MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT #400

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Fred Rundle, Ed.D, Superintendent

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Dear Mercer Island Students, Staff, and Community,

The start of school on August 31 is just 30 days away. Over the course of the next month you will receive messages from the schools and district to launch us into the 2022-2023 school year. Please be checking emails, following us on social media and looking at the [MISD/school websites](#) for information. The surge in communication from us is integral to a smooth start to the new year and living one of our four core values-ensuring safe and supportive learning environments.

If you need to update your email address or phone number in Skyward to receive MISD communications, please contact Vanessa Adams at vanessa.adams@mercerislandschools.org or 206-236-3330.

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2022-2023 School Calendar

The [2022-2023 academic school calendar](#) is posted on the Mercer Island School District website. Regular school attendance is important to the overall success for students. Thus, I would like to draw your attention to a few key aspects of this year's calendar.

- August 31 - First Day of School for 1st-12th graders
- September 6 - First Day for Kindergarten
- January 3 - First day back from winter break (Tuesday)
- March 20 - Weather make-up day: If one or more days of school are canceled before March 20, this will be a school day. If school is not canceled prior to March 20 this will be a non-school day.
- May 26 - Weather make-up day: If one or more days of school are canceled between March 20 and May 26, this will be a school day. If school is not canceled this will be a non-school day.
- June 19 - No school to recognize Washington State's newest holiday, Juneteenth.
- June 23 - Last day of school.

Mercer Island School District recognizes that families and students celebrate and recognize days within the school year that are important to their traditions, culture, and religion, but these cherished days may not necessarily align with state and federal holidays. We are committed to the whole-child and will therefore make a more concerted effort to remain mindful of our students' identities when scheduling events and assigning critical learning assignments. Please keep in contact with our teachers and staff to help us better understand your child and their need for flexibility.

Student Safety and School Security

School safety-physically, socially, and emotionally- has been on my mind, especially since the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. This horrific school shooting, lingering impacts of COVID, and the challenges I am privy to that our students are facing right here on Mercer Island weigh heavily on me. I want to update the community on enhancements we have made to our schools in recent years, ways we are reenergizing our commitment to school safety, and plans for further COVID mitigation in 2022-2023.

Before going into these details, I want to provide some positive attributes and community assets we have going for us in the Mercer Island School District.

- In the most recent Educational Effectiveness Survey (EES), 80% of our 4th-12th graders reported feeling safe at school. This clearly leaves room for improvement, but this is consistent with our trend over time.
- On the same EES survey, 90% of parents (K-12) reported their children feel safe at school.
- We have an incredible partnership with the City of Mercer Island.
 - The Mercer Island Police Department continues to be a terrific partner. Not only do we share resources to maintain a school resource officer (SRO), we work with Chief Ed Holmes and Officer Jennifer Franklin on emergency preparedness.
 - Mercer Island Youth and Family Services provides seven mental health counselors in our schools and plans to add an eighth in the 2022-2023 school year.
 - Together, MISD and the City collaborate in a forum called the Youth Concerns Committee.
 - The City facilitates and MISD participates in the Healthy Youth Initiative.

Volunteer and Visitor Check-in

Each school has a secure vestibule at the main entrance. Visitors to the school may enter the first set of doors but must check-in before entering through the next doors. We ask that all parents and other visitors enter through the main entrance and adhere to this expectation.

In order to ensure that we have an accurate list of volunteers and visitors that have entered our school buildings, we utilize a self-service check-in kiosk called Raptor at all of our schools. Volunteers and visitors will be asked to provide a government issued id, take a photo and answer some basic questions regarding their visit. We ask that all volunteers and visitors wear the badge that is generated during the check-in process in a way that it is clearly visible while they are inside our school buildings.

Say Something

The District is continuing its partnership with [Sandy Hook Promise](#), a national non-profit organization with a track record, reputation, and knowledge of how to work effectively with kids, parents, and teachers to improve school safety and culture.

Both IMS and MIHS students have 24/7/365 access to the [Say Something Anonymous Reporting System \(SS-ARS\)](#) through an App installed on their District-issued device, the website, or telephone hotline (1-844-5-SayNow, 1-844-572-9669). Parents and community members can submit tips using the [SS-ARS website](#), the App, which can be downloaded from both Apple and Android app stores, or the hotline. Along with the [Say Something App](#), students are given access to age-appropriate educational resources on how to recognize warning signals and threats on social media, in school, or in their community, while empowering them to act quickly to help a fellow student or others in need. [Say Something](#) trains students to report these events to a trusted adult OR use its anonymous reporting system.

For more information about [Say Something](#), please refer to the [Say Something Anonymous Reporting System \(SS-ARS\) Frequently Asked Questions document](#).

Cyber Security

The MISD Instructional Technology team invested time and attention into improving the electronic and online security features across the district. All families and staff received an email in July with a more

comprehensive explanation of improvements. This work is ongoing in an effort to keep our school district and community safe. The security improvements that have been completed to date are below:

- Changed the format of our standard student password;
- Staff and students will not be permitted to access or sign into their Google services outside of North America. Exceptions can be made by contacting admin.techs@mercerislandschools.org
- Students in grades 6-12 have been encouraged to change their passwords to a more secure password. [Instructions on changing their password are posted on our website.](#)

During the 2022-2023 school year, we will implement additional security measures like Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA).

Staff Training

In partnership with the Mercer Island Police Department, our administrators will be participating in updated school safety training and taking our entire staff through new and refresher training this fall. We focused heavily on COVID mitigation and safety for the past two years, and with good reason. However, we need to reinvest time and attention to other safety measures which include but are not limited to:

- Earthquake preparedness;
- Active shooter and lockdowns;
- Shelter in place;
- Fire drills;
- Evacuations; and
- Reunification.

Classroom Lockdowns

Our operations and maintenance teams installed a new security feature to be used in schools for lockdowns. This new security feature is magnetic safety locks for classroom doors. These magnetic locks help teachers and school administrators secure classroom doors in emergency situations. The magnets alert first responders on the safety needs of classrooms through a color coded display.

Schools and law enforcement have learned from previous school shootings and other threats. The “proper way” to respond to an active shooter or threat to a school has been debated. Based on our discussions with MIPD and others in the field, MISD will be implementing ALICE in the 2022-2023 year. ALICE is an acronym that stands for **A**lert, **L**ockdown, **I**nform, **C**ounter, **E**vacuate. We will provide more information in the coming months.

Mercer Island School District **DOES NOT** include students in active shooter drills or other simulations. Not only does recent legislation prevent schools from conducting such simulations with students, doing so poses psychological and emotional risks to students of all ages. Our drills are done as rehearsals of what to do “in the event of” a threat or emergency.

Transportation

Each school year our drivers attend training that updates them on any new and existing laws or regulations that involve Pupil Transportation. We also train on any new technology and district and department policies. Our drivers are assigned their routes on that day. Due to driver shortage, we will offer transportation to all students that live on Mercer Island according to district walk rules. This year we will require parents to sign their students up for transportation after agreeing that their student will abide by the [transportation rules](#).

We use cameras on all of our buses (ranging from 2 to 6 cameras depending on the size and age of our buses). These cameras have been used to help identify safety and behavioral issues during our bus runs. We are currently installing a new student safety feature on all our buses to prevent any student from being inadvertently left on a bus. When a driver parks a bus and turns off the ignition, they must walk to the back of the bus and deactivate an alarm that will otherwise begin to sound much like a car alarm. This new feature

ensures that our drivers check their buses after each and every route for any students who may not have departed the bus either at the school or a bus stop.

COVID-19 Mitigation

This week, August 1-5, we expect to hear from Washington State and King County Departments of Health about COVID-19 guidelines for the 2022-2023 school year. Once we receive these, we will review, interpret, and update the community.

We applied for a grant to increase staffing for our school health rooms. We were able to add one additional person last year and have asked to continue this position and add another in 2022-2023. These positions will support testing, communication, classroom outbreak monitoring, and allow our nurses to tend to all aspects of student health and not just COVID.

Each August, families must complete the RSVP process to officially enroll/reenroll in the school district. We ask that you verify your residence, review many policies and procedures, and complete other forms for the upcoming year. One of those forms is consent for the nurses to conduct COVID tests at school. You do not have to consent to this, but doing so will make the testing process much easier and more timely.

I am humbled and honored to serve as your new superintendent of schools. Together, we will improve upon our systems to promote sustainability, invest in our schools and staff to elevate our potential, and commit to our students and their long-term ability to thrive.

Sincerely,

Fred Rundle

Mercer Island School District 400 would like to continue connecting with you via email. If you prefer to be removed from our list, please contact Mercer Island School District 400 directly. To stop receiving all email messages distributed through our SchoolMessenger service, follow this link and confirm: [Unsubscribe](#)

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