



March 30, 2023

Dear Lamoille North Families and Staff,

As promised in communication from earlier today, we want to provide an update regarding the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department's (LCSD) investigation into an alleged threat directed at Lamoille Union Middle School.

First and foremost, Sheriff Marcoux and other law enforcement officers state that there is currently **no evidence of any credible threat**. While the Sheriff's department continues to conduct a thorough investigation, we will continue to have their presence on campus. And until the investigation is complete and safety is ensured, any individuals we know of with alleged involvement will not be present on campus.

Whenever there is a situation where we hear from law enforcement about a potential situation that may include violence, law enforcement officials become Incident Command and drive decisions and action plans. We are fortunate to have a strong collaboration with LCSD and rely on their expertise to direct us in these unfortunate and disturbing situations. While this morning's phone call notifying parents and caregivers of the situation came later than an inclement weather call, it was made within 15 minutes of receiving guidance from law enforcement. These situations are fluid with many moving parts and LCSD was not able to give us guidance at the typical time we make weather calls. Because they take command of the situation, we rely upon their timing when it comes to communication, but we do work quickly to share those updates as soon as we receive them.

We want to take this opportunity to again stress that parents, caregivers, and families always have the option to keep their children at home if they are concerned for safety, whether it involves road conditions or anything else. The absence will be excused.

What we are seeing in New England and across the United States are increasing numbers of violent events in schools, religious establishments, grocery stores, workplaces and a myriad of other community venues. This is a community problem that will take all of our efforts to address. It is easy to feel helpless in the face of the tragedies we regularly see on the news. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and like there is nothing we can do to make a difference. It is easy to feel scared for our safety and the safety of the children and colleagues in our care; however, I can share with you the things we do in schools to keep our students and staff safe that I believe make a difference:

- We have a relentless focus on both building trusting relationships and a sense of belonging and connection with our students and staff so that people feel safe. Examples of this include our districtwide work in restorative practices and PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports).
- We have built a culture that fosters the concept of "[See Something, Say Something](#)." We want to be a school system where students and staff feel comfortable and safe reporting concerns. We saw with this situation that the system does work and that a tip reported to the safety hotline was made and received to investigate. We want to hear concerns so that they can be reviewed for credibility. Each of the school websites has the hotline information easily accessible. The [tip line](#) can be used by anyone.

- We diligently follow the state-recommended internal threat assessment protocols to ensure that all students or staff about whom we have concerns are properly investigated and supported. Every school has a threat assessment team.
- We continue to practice and refine our mandatory drills and safety protocols according to a monthly calendar of drills in each school. Schools receive ongoing training in the Vermont Safety Center training “Run, Hide and Fight”, which is an options-based strategy to be used in situations where there may be violence.
- We have access controls in all of our schools to better ensure physical safety of students and staff.

No one wants to have to train in these protocols, but it is much more important to have a plan that students and staff know about to help assuage the fear of an event involving violence. We believe that true safety is a combination of both emotional safety and wellbeing that comes from belonging and trust, and physical safety that is a result of secure buildings and consistent drill practice for warranted situations.

Please know that the physical and emotional safety and well-being of our students and staff are always the priority. We will continue to keep you updated on the status of the investigation. For tomorrow, as mentioned earlier in this communication, we will have police presence throughout the day on campus.

For any questions about the alleged threat, please reach out to LCSD at 802-888-3502 and for questions about building safety protocols, please contact your building principals.

Our best to you,

Catherine Gallagher, M.Ed., Superintendent, LNSU
Denise Maurice, Principal, LUMS
Bethann Pirie, Principal, LUHS