AURORA LEARNERS
FUTURE READY

Our Shared Commitment to School Safety

There is no responsibility we share that is more important than protecting the students and staff who enter our schools each day.

You already know the safety protocols we have in place throughout the Aurora City School District, and those procedures remain in effect. You have practiced them, helped us refine them and, most importantly, you understand the responsibility each of us carries when an emergency requires an immediate and coordinated response.

In late September, members of our administrative team joined our school resource officers and members of the Aurora Police Department for crisis response and communication training. We worked through the kinds of circumstances we hope never to encounter - a severe storm, explosion, or other major emergency with a focus on an active-shooter situation - to examine not simply how we would respond, but how effectively all pieces of our response would work together.

We focused on the flow of information between first responders and district leaders, the decisions that must be made in the first critical minutes, providing timely and accurate communication to staff and families, coordinating evacuation and reunification, and preventing rumor and misinformation from interfering with an effective emergency response.

The training also reinforced something important: school safety depends on all of us. Administrators, teachers, support staff, SROs, police, transportation personnel and families each have a role to play. Our ability to respond effectively depends upon all of us knowing the plan and working together.

An Added Precautionary Measure

As part of our continuing preparedness efforts, we emphasized an important safety measure within our existing protocols.

In the event of a crisis at any Aurora school requiring the quick action of first-responders, the district may initiate a precautionary lockdown at our other schools as well. I want to emphasize what that means - and what it does not mean.

A precautionary lockdown at another district building does not necessarily indicate that there is a threat at that school. It is an added measure designed to protect students and staff throughout the district while allowing police, fire and emergency medical personnel unobstructed access to the affected school.

That added protocol can help keep surrounding roads clear and limit unnecessary traffic while emergency vehicles are responding to an incident or crisis. Should evacuation become necessary, that simple procedure also allows our transportation resources to move students and staff efficiently and enables us to maintain a timely and orderly process for reunifying students with their families.

In any emergency, minutes matter. Keeping roads and access points clear can make a meaningful difference in how quickly our safety forces can respond.

What We Are Asking of the Aurora Community

We are sharing this same school safety update with our families and community as well because they, too, are vital partners in our emergency response.

We know that when parents hear there may be an emergency involving their child's school, their instinct, naturally, is to rush to the school to get their child as quickly as possible. We understand and share that instinct. But during an active emergency, a surge of vehicles and people toward a school in lockdown can unintentionally make the work of first responders more difficult, impede emergency vehicles and complicate an evacuation or reunification already underway.

For that reason, we are advising families to follow district directions in the event of a crisis at any of our schools, to rely on official district communications for information and timely updates, and to avoid coming to a school or emergency scene unless directed to do so.

We are also asking our community to help us control something that can spread even faster than traffic**:** unverified information. During a crisis, texts and social media posts can quickly become rumor, and rumor can create fear, confusion and even panic. We will communicate as quickly as circumstances allow, sharing what we know, acknowledging what we do not yet know and providing clear instructions about what families should do next.

We are asking our families to help us by waiting for verified information and avoiding the sharing of unconfirmed reports. That cooperation helps our first responders focus on the emergency while allowing the district to provide families with accurate information and direction.

Your Role in School Safety Is Essential

I wanted to share with you what we are communicating to families about our crisis protocols because our message must be consistent - from the district, from our schools and from the people our families know and trust.

Should we ever activate these procedures, staff should continue to follow the safety protocols with which you are already familiar, remain attentive to district instructions and rely on verified information from the district and first responders rather than information circulating through texts or social media.

Just as importantly, our students will look to you for guidance.

Your calm presence, your familiarity with our procedures and your willingness to follow directions can provide tremendous reassurance to students during what may be a frightening and confusing experience. You also play an important role in reinforcing for our families that there is a planned and coordinated response underway and that following the directions they receive is one of the most important ways families can help us protect their children.

Our recent training of our security team and district administrators was an important reminder that safe schools are not created by a crisis plan sitting on a shelf. They are created by people who know the plan, understand one another's responsibilities and are prepared to work together when circumstances demand it.

I am grateful for the seriousness with which you approach that responsibility every day. Our preparedness for any crisis depends not only on our partnership with the Aurora Police Department and other first responders, but on the professionalism, good judgment and care of the people working inside our schools - and on the trust and cooperation of the community surrounding us.

It is my hope that we never have to put these plans into action. But if we do, I have tremendous confidence in our ability to respond together - with preparation, calm, compassion and a shared commitment to the safety of every student and staff member in our care.

Thank you for being part of that commitment.

Sincerely,



Paul Milcetich, PhD
Superintendent
Aurora City School District