

June 12, 2007

To: Parents, Faculty and Staff

Looking back at the 2006-2007 school year, I am relieved that we have been spared the violence and heartache that has touched some of our nation's schools and universities. In the fall, I wrote to assure you that the Arlington School District is doing everything we can to provide the highest level of security for our children. Throughout the year, we have been practicing our own emergency procedures and re-examining all of our internal safeguards and security measures. Unfortunately, last month's shootings at Virginia Tech have once again thrust the issue of school violence to the forefront of our attention.

With the passage of the 2007-2008 school year budget, we have been able to include two new security measures to protect our students. First, remote entry security systems will be installed at all of our elementary and middle schools. This system was installed at Titusville Intermediate School on a trial basis and will be duplicated at the other schools this summer. This simple and inexpensive system will allow us to keep all front entrance doors locked at all times after students arrive. Visitors will be recognized by office personnel visually and by intercom. Only those who are authorized will then be buzzed into the school. Please note that the high school will continue to enforce all security measures currently in place, which include security monitors posted at the entry.

In addition, due to student population growth in our district, as well as increasing concerns about student health and safety, we will hire a Supervisor of Health, Safety, and Emergency Procedures. This person will provide more regular oversight of our school emergency preparedness, nursing efforts, and health programs.

Finally, one of the most tragic aspects of the Virginia Tech incident is that the perpetrator was known to have had significant psychiatric issues prior to the incident. Identifying students-at-risk is the first step in effective prevention. As we improve guidance, school psychologist, and social worker ratios, we are even further prepared to recognize concerns before they escalate to a crisis. Our administrators, guidance counselors, and faculty are always on alert to identify students with emotional concerns that could lead to dangerous behavior.

We will continue to do everything necessary to keep our schools safe and we ask for your support in this endeavor. You can help by stressing with your child the importance of informing staff whenever he/she has information or concerns related to the safety of students and others.

If you have any questions or concerns in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Frank V. Pepe Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

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