

March 22, 2018

To the families of Charlotte County Schools and our community,

We continue to share in the nation's collective grief following the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. Student safety is essential. Charlotte County Schools, in partnership with the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office and Punta Gorda Police Department, have established extensive school safety procedures and have reviewed current protocol to ensure effectiveness and to authorize additional action, if necessary.

### **Actions we are taking to keep your child safe**

Safety is our top priority. We work to ensure that our buildings are as safe as possible. Safety and security audits for each of our schools are conducted annually and consistently to prioritize the safety needs of each school.

The most important action we take to protect student safety is to create a sense of welcome and belonging for our students. However, here are just some of the additional safety precautions we have in place at schools throughout the district:

- Updating school safety plans each year
- Staffing every one of our elementary, middle and high schools with a School Resource Officer
- Holding emergency drills, including lockdowns and evacuations
- Training staff and students on how to respond in emergency situations
- Requiring mandatory ID badges for staff
- Limiting school access to one point-of-entry during school hours
- Utilizing a buzzer system which provides school office staff some time to verify a visitor's identity before allowing entrance into the main part of the campus
- Monitoring school hallways with security cameras
- Staffing our high schools with at least one security specialist
- Joint training with the command staff of both the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office and the Punta Gorda Police Department
- Analyzing thorough assessments of the "hard scape" of school buildings to improve and enforce school safety

## **Actions families can take**

Families play an important role in helping our schools remain safe. We need your vigilance to ensure that any safety concern is reported immediately. If you or your child see something, say something. Call your school's administrator, a school district official, or if it is an emergency – call 911 immediately.

Here are some other suggestions of action you can take:

- Discuss school safety with your children while acknowledging the issue that is gripping our nation
- Stay connected and monitor your student's social media activities
- Follow the law and lock any firearms in an approved storage component or locker
- Ensure your children do not have access to firearms while visiting other homes

We believe that students should report to school ready and able to develop their love of learning while planning and preparing for their future without the fear or worry that their school may be the scene of the next national tragedy.

**Finally, after extensive conversations among the Charlotte School District, the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office and the Punta Gorda Police Department, we believe the best avenue to keep our students as safe as possible in school is not to arm teachers but rather to staff the schools with the needed additional School Resource Officers and mental health professionals. Charlotte County Schools will not be arming their teachers. Charlotte County Schools and local law enforcement will continue to work together to keep our students and school community safe.**

Superintendent Dionisio   School Board Chair Vincent   Sheriff Prummell   Police Chief Davis