



**Sheriff Bill Prummell**

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# **Charlotte County Sheriff's Office**

**Integrity, Professionalism, Trust**

February 11, 2020

Dear Parents,

Since the passing of Senate Bill 7026, the Sheriff's Office and school faculty have been preparing, training, and conducting active shooter drills. All this training was put to the test on January 28<sup>th</sup> when a report of an armed man was observed along the school perimeter. Immediately, school staff and the school resource deputy sprang into action, two bordering schools were placed on lock down, and students secured.

Law enforcement responded in vast numbers. Within minutes, the armed individual was apprehended. Luckily, it was later determined that attacking the schools or causing harm to anyone was not his intent. To be sure, we still moved forward, clearing the schools, classroom by classroom, followed by the task of reunification of students with their parents.

Overall the response went very well, and all should be confident that your schools and law enforcement reacted calmly and appropriately, ensuring our students, your children, were safe. There were some things we identified that we could do even better, and we are working on that.

Other issues that we encountered, as expected, can only be mitigated with your help. As a parent, I understand how our natural instinct is to protect our young. I need to ask for your trust. We have worked diligently with the students to provide them with the information and training to try and keep them as safe as we can under certain circumstances.

We know we cannot control the use of cell phones and social media during these events. First, please do not contradict what your child has been told by staff or law enforcement during an emergency. We had parents communicating with their children doing just that. Also, keep in mind that while your student is hiding and maintaining silence, you potentially put them at risk by calling their phone.

Second, many parents responded to the schools, and while I am not going to stop you, I do ask that you please go to the designated area(s) and stay out of the way. I know this is hard to do, to watch and wait, but I need that from you. Each deputy and faculty member have responsibilities and a job to do. During this incident, we had parents arguing with deputies and school faculty, which diverts their attention from what they need to be focused on – the safety of our children. This is not the time for debate.

Last, but certainly not least, please pay attention only to what information you receive from the schools and law enforcement. Many speculate and begin posting erroneous information. These situations are very volatile and require a very rapid response. We cannot give you the blow-by-blow but will update you as we are able to. I encourage all parents, grandparents, and guardians to download the CCSO app and follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and/or Facebook. We will use these platforms to push out updates and information, so you know what is going on and what to do.

We all want to keep our children safe. Together we stand a much better chance of doing just that.

***Be Strong, Be Safe, and Never Quit!***

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Prummell".

Sheriff Bill Prummell