



SCHOOL SAFETY ALWAYS A PRIORITY

*Answers to questions about
Clovis Unified's safe school plans
reassure in wake of Florida
school shooting*



Events Wednesday in Florida, have impacted everyone in our nation. As educators we feel deeply our responsibility, every day, to watch over the safety of our students. Our hearts are breaking for the families and children who have lost loved ones and friends in Florida, and I recognize that families in Clovis Unified may have questions about their local schools' plans to promote safety on our campuses.

In Clovis Unified, we have an extensive safe school system that is regularly practiced and reviewed at the school site level. In addition, we have collaborated with law enforcement to provide active shooter training to our staffs, and to ensure a thorough review of our existing safe school plans. I'm sure that every parent in our district is interested in these safety systems, which include multi-tiered steps that involve our entire community in ensuring the security of our school buildings.

As we reflect on the tragedy that unfolded in Florida Wednesday, be assured that every element of our existing safety protocols is being re-examined to ensure it is relevant and reflects up-to-date best practices. The information contained here about our safe school system and how to talk with young people about tragedy may also be of interest to you as together we mourn for the families who have lost loved ones in Florida.

Thank you for your partnership in our efforts to create a safe and welcoming environment on our campuses for every student.

Sincerely,

Eimear O'Farrell, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Safety is Our Priority

Each school in Clovis Unified has developed an extensive Safe School Plan, which carefully outlines steps taken to ensure preparedness for a number of different potential safety threats to a school campus. A brochure summarizing details of our safety protocols, including steps that school visitors must take when entering CUSD schools is available online and in school offices. The information guide is also available in Spanish and Hmong translations. To view the complete guide online, visit www.cusd.com/schoolsafety.

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Learn more at www.cusd.com/schoolsafety



Talk to Your Child in the Wake of a Tragedy

These are tips compiled from CUSD's Psychology Department and the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement. You know your child best and should therefore use your discretion in tailoring your discussions with your child based on his/her personality and age.

Have a Conversation

Resources are also available to families from the following websites.

Addressing Grief: Tips for Teachers and Administrators

https://www.lacoe.edu/Portals/0/StudentServices/Addressing_Grief_Tips_for_Teachers_and_Administrators_FINAL.pdf

Helping Youth after Community Trauma: Tips for Educators

https://www.lacoe.edu/Portals/0/StudentServices/helping_youth_after_community_violence_educators.pdf

Talking to Children About Violence

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers>

- Conversations about this topic with your children should be qualitatively different than those with your peers and spouses. Be tolerant and accepting of a wide range of reactions including no reaction at all. No overt reaction to a situation like this does not mean that children are unaware or unconcerned. Nor does it necessarily mean that the child's lack of reaction is unhealthy.
- Start the conversation. Talk about the event with your child; not talking about it makes the event even more threatening in your child's mind.
- What does your child already know? Start by asking what your child has already heard about the events from the media as well as from friends. Listen for what understanding he or she has reached.
- Gently correct inaccurate information. If you hear inaccurate information or misunderstandings, provide the correct information at a level that your child can understand.
- Encourage your child to ask questions, and answer those questions directly. Your child may have some difficult questions about the events in Florida. Whatever questions your child may have, answer. This lets the child know that you are open to talking about anything and can be trusted to answer.
- Help those in need. Work with your child to figure out a way that he or she can help the people who were affected by the disaster, such as making a card that can be sent (often agencies such as churches or Red Cross will accept such cards). If they work, this may include making a small donation from their earnings or allowance.
- Be a positive role model. Consider sharing your feelings about the tragic event with your child. This is an opportunity for you to role model how to cope and how to plan for the future. Before you reach out, however, be sure you are able to express a positive or hopeful plan.
- Be patient. In times of stress, children may have more trouble with their behavior, concentration, and attention. They will need a little extra patience, care, and love.
- If you have concerns about your child's behavior, contact your family's pediatrician, other primary care provider, or a qualified mental health care specialist.
- Sometimes the most helpful action you can take to support your children is to simply BE THERE...quietly, reflectively, lovingly.
- Emphasize hope. Be honest and authentic about your sorrow and concern, but reassure the child about his or her future in any way that is realistic. Most small and elementary age children are asking "Are you afraid?" in order to determine whether or not they should be. It's okay to let your child know you have fears and concerns, but put them in perspective.
- Limit your child's media exposure to coverage about the event as it can be disturbing and difficult to process for young children.