

NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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John A. Provost, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Nick Bernier, M.Ed.
Business Administrator

May 24, 2022

Dear NPS Community,

This evening we are absorbing the news of a school shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. We work hard to create caring, safe school communities in which adults and students respect and trust each other and all students feel connected, understand expectations, and receive the behavioral and mental health support they need. Through our social/emotional curriculum and supports such as Responsive Classroom and our partnership with Clinical Support Options, in-school counseling and psychological supports, and our Anti-Bullying Policy, we work proactively to support students, as well as address behaviors that could become unsafe.

Nevertheless, events such as these can raise anxieties for all who learn and work in schools and for caregivers who trust us to keep their children safe. We can help children feel safe by maintaining a sense of normalcy, security, and routine and talking with them about their feelings. I would ask school administrators, school psychologists, and counselors to increase their visibility throughout the day tomorrow.

School employees who may want confidential help processing this information are reminded that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is always available. You may reach the EAP at 1-800-451-1834 or 1-844-263-1982. You may also reach out to your administrator for assistance in accessing these resources.

The following suggested talking points from the National Association of School Psychologists may help you while discussing this situation with your students:

- Schools are safe places. School staff work with parents and public safety providers (local police and fire departments, emergency responders, hospitals, etc.) to keep you safe.
- We all play a role in school safety. Be observant and let an adult know if you see or hear something that makes you feel uncomfortable, nervous or frightened.
- There is a difference between reporting, tattling or gossiping. You can provide important information that may prevent harm either directly or anonymously by telling a trusted adult what you know or hear.
- Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen, it is important to understand the difference between the possibility of something happening and probability that it will affect you (our school community).
- Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand. Doing things that you enjoy, sticking to your normal routine, and being with friends and family help make us feel better and keep us from worrying about the event.

- Sometimes people do bad things that hurt others. They may be unable to handle their anger, may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or suffering from mental illness. Adults work very hard to identify these people in order to help them and keep them from hurting others. It is important for all of us to know how to get help if we feel really upset or angry or know somebody who is having these challenges.
- In order to maintain safety around guns and other weapons, follow all applicable safety rules and protocols and do not touch any weapon without adult supervision.
- Violence is never a solution to personal problems. Students can be part of the positive solution by participating in anti-violence programs at school, learning conflict mediation skills, and seeking help from an adult if they or a peer is struggling with anger, depression, or other emotions they cannot control.

Open communication between home and school is critical to the safety and well-being of our students and your children. I invite caregivers to let us know if you have a concern or question about our safety protocols, your children's safety, or the safety of their friends.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Provost, Ed.D.", written in a cursive style.

John A. Provost, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools