



February 23, 2018

Dear SFUSD Community Members:

We share in the collective grief and concern following the most recent mass shooting at a school in Florida (and the other senseless tragedies that occurred prior). Parents, students and educators are asking what we can do to prevent this from ever happening again. I want to update you regarding our safety plans and preparations here in SFUSD.

Promoting safe schools

Schools have security measures to ensure the well-being of students and staff. While each school's security system differs based on the size and layout of its campus and other factors, security measures may include: visitor check-in procedures, locked doors after the start of the school day, surveillance cameras, school resource officers and security aides.

Furthermore, actively cultivating strong relationships at school -- between students and students and students and adults -- is fundamental to safety and it's something our schools do very well. Youth face a lot of challenges and need a range of trusted adults to support them. That's why SFUSD has more school counselors and social workers per student than almost any other school district in the state. We believe it is part of our responsibility to cultivate students' mental health and social-emotional well-being.

We also encourage awareness and swift reporting. Serious potentially life-threatening incidents have been intercepted by staff and students reporting concerns immediately. We will continue to emphasize: If you see or hear something that may cause someone to harm themselves or others, say something.

Preparing for potential emergencies

The district has a comprehensive crisis plan in the event of a city-wide emergency, and district administrators coordinate closely with city emergency management officials and law enforcement representatives to monitor and update school site specific plans on an annual basis.

All schools have emergency response teams and are asked to practice safety protocol drills at least three times per year. Schools partner with the SF Police Department (SFPD) to conduct Lockdown drills and we will continue to work with SFPD to make sure these types of drills take place in an age-appropriate way that helps ensure our students know what to do in the event that this type of incident should occur.

If an emergency does occur at a school, we will notify parents as quickly as possible using a variety of means including text, email and phone call. In order to receive messages, your child's school must have your current contact information and you must opt-in to receive text messages (by law

we cannot text you more than once without your permission). Once your mobile number is in the student information system, you will receive a message from SchoolMessenger. You can respond with a "YES." If you received a message from SchoolMessenger and did not opt-in, it's not too late. To receive emergency text notifications, text "YES" to 67587 from your mobile phone. Please note, this will only work if your mobile number is entered correctly in the district's system already.

More information about SFUSD's safety and emergency plans can be found here:

<http://www.sfusd.edu/en/safety-and-emergency-plan/overview.html>

Supporting student leadership and community action

I am heartened to see young people and others across the nation speaking out and staging protests in response to the Stoneman Douglas High School tragedy and the government's failure to regulate guns.

According to the [Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#), stricter gun laws have resulted in fewer gun deaths per capita. Fortunately, California ranks high for gun safety. However, we know that we are still not immune from the threat and we are part of a bigger society that, on the whole, is facing a serious problem.

There are differing viewpoints about how to prevent future school shootings. Our job as educators is to create a space where all viewpoints can be heard and critically examined. While we must remain non-partisan, we are not neutral. In SFUSD we share a core value of social justice and we support students in being agents of positive change in their communities, whatever that looks like to them.

Recent events can be teachable moments and moments for positive change. Staff have received resources for processing this tragedy with students and teaching meaningful standards-based lessons.

We expect there will be protests, some we may know of in advance and some we may not. If a student walkout or protest happens, school staff are advised to allow the students to peacefully protest. If students leave the classroom/school (walk out), staff must mark the student down for an unexcused tardy or absence. School administrators and local law enforcement will deploy appropriate resources to ensure that our students are safe and can protest peacefully. Additionally, we will do our best to inform students' guardians in a timely manner if a student is not in school.

SFUSD has many practices in place to keep our students safe and we are committed to doing even more to prepare for the various types of crises that could occur. As a community, let's continue to work together to be vigilant in ensuring that our schools here and across the nation are safe and nurturing learning environments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vincent C. Matthews".

Dr. Vincent Matthews, Superintendent