

Dear Lewiston-Porter School Community,

On Wednesday, February 14th, Valentine's Day, often a very special day in schools when we celebrate love and friendship, our hearts were again broken by another school shooting, another tragedy as we witnessed the terrible events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, Florida. It is hard to imagine that this is possible in our modern world. How can a country, often the envy of the rest of the world, in terms of freedom and opportunity, allow this to happen year after year, after year? I wish I had the answer. When I entered this profession in 1987, I would not have imagined it possible that a child might leave for school in the morning and never return to their family at night. What a chilling reality we face today.

The purpose of my correspondence is not to debate this issue. Clearly, change is necessary. How our society approaches weapons and how we create access to certain weapons must be reviewed. Moreover, how we deal with and help identify individuals with mental health issues, so as to get them the help they desperately need, must also be addressed. School districts across the nation are the frontline of this problem. We must be a strong voice in the necessary change.

At Lewiston-Porter, we have been extremely mindful with our focus on safety and security across the district. First and foremost is our strong relationship with local law enforcement, led by the Lewiston Police Department. We have forged a strong partnership with all local law enforcement agencies as we drill and practice for the many emergency scenarios that could develop. We also employ armed security officers that patrol our campus each day, covering arrival and dismissal at all of our buildings and offering coverage across our campus during the course of the school day. We have most recently updated all of our security cameras across our campus, adding almost 140 new cameras and creating a camera interface with the Lewiston Police Department. Through recent capital projects, we have created more secure, isolated entrances that allow for stronger vetting of those seeking to gain access to our buildings. Most importantly, through our administration, school counselors and school social workers we have created programming and offered services to families and students as issues and problems develop at school. I can say, with confidence, that as a district we know our students and families well. We continually work to create positive school cultures in each of our buildings where students can feel valued and appreciated for who they are as individuals.

It is important to remember however that no plan is perfect. We must stay ever vigilant for signs of concern as they arise. And in order to stay vigilant, we need the community as well. If you see something, say something. In this day of instant technological access and social media, there is a tremendous amount of information flowing continually. If something causes you or your child concern, call the school and ask to speak with a Principal, Assistant Principal, Counselor or Social Worker. If you

feel that danger is imminent call law enforcement immediately. We will follow up and and we will engage the Lewiston Police Department in that follow up, if necessary.

We have a great school district. Each day it is such a joy to revel in the amazing work our students accomplish. I promise that we will remain ever vigilant and do whatever it takes to keep our students safe. As a community, through our schools, we can create a world of opportunities for our young people. Let us always seek to create a safe haven of learning where students can work towards their goals and dreams.

All the best

Paul J. Casseri,  
Superintendent of Schools