

## **School Safety:**

I wanted to discuss school safety tonight. First, our prayers go out to the families devastated by the recent acts of violence that have taken place in some of our nation's schools. Such horrific acts can instill concern, confusion, and fear in all of us, especially our students.

Since Friday, my cabinet and I, my school administrators, along with our School Resource Officers have investigated a number of concerns and rumors about possible threats to our schools that have been reported to us. Thankfully, I can say our investigations have not found any credible evidence to support the reports. This is important – Pocono Mountain School District and the police have not found any evidence of a threat made against any of our schools or the District.

What we have found are rumors of possible threats running rampant and being amplified through social media sites. This is creating fear and panic among some of our parents, and it is not helpful. It actually makes it much harder for the district and the police to investigate concerns when rumors are shared among other students and parents. The best course of action to help us keep our students and schools safe is for parents and students to report concerns immediately and directly to our administrators or the police and to resist the urge to share it with their friends.

- Let me assure you, every rumor, every call from a parent with a concern is investigated as if there is a possible threat, as we have always done. A very inappropriate SnapChat user name was treated as a possible threat even though the SnapChat user never made a threatening statement against our schools. We investigated this and the information was turned over to the police for their action.
- A photo that caused some concern was found to be created by a teenager in another state and the police in that state arrested the teen.

We will continue to investigate any rumor or concern brought to our attention and to immediately report the concern to the police for their action.

We have been coordinating with the police daily on our security measures to ensure we are taking the appropriate steps to keep our students and schools safe. We are very fortunate to have the Pocono Mountain Regional Police Department as our partners in keeping our schools safe. We also have the support of our Pocono Township Police Department and the PA State Police, as needed.

We try to provide our parents and our school community with as much information as possible as quickly as we can. However, it's important for parents to understand that our first priority and responsibility is to ensure the safety of our students, our employees, and our schools. This means that before we can communicate with our parents about the report of a possible concern, we need to notify the police and investigate the concern to determine if it is in any way credible. In these situations, it is critically important that we move quickly and separate fact from fiction.

Today, Officer William Carey, Ms. Beth DeLay, and I met with all students in Grades 5 through 12 on the East side of our District. Tomorrow we will meet with those same grades at our West schools. We are talking with our students about our commitment to keeping our students and our schools safe, our students' role in school safety, the importance of reporting any concerns to

trusted adults, our students' responsibility in helping to stop the spread of rumors, and how to seek help if they are feeling anxious, afraid, depressed or see others in their schools who may need help.

My Cabinet and I continually monitor events of concern across the nation and any reports brought to our attention. I can assure you that I will make any adjustments to our safety measures that are necessary to keep our students and schools safe.