



OPEN FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 18, 2019

What are we doing to keep our schools and students safe?

Student and staff safety at school is our #1 priority. Without this, learning cannot happen. In order for academic learning and social-emotional learning to happen, everyone must feel safe and welcomed within the school community. This involves many aspects all wrapped up in both physical safety and emotional safety. So what are we doing about it?

Let's take physical safety first. Here are some of the most important actions we're taking:

- Comprehensive School Safety Plans – Every school develops and implements a plan to ensure safety under a variety of circumstances such as fire, a dangerous intruder, child abuse, flooding, water and air quality, and more. Every year, the plans are reviewed, updated, and approved by our Board of Trustees.
- Regular Safety Drills – Our elementary schools have monthly practice drills and our secondary schools do them quarterly. There are different types of drills including fire, duck and cover, and the new “run, hide, fight” ALICE approach. Our leaders, teachers, staff and students practice all types of drills so we can be as prepared as possible for the unthinkable.
- Safety Threat Protocol – When we have a safety threat presented by one of our own students, we implement a protocol that has been vetted by our behavioral health experts and law enforcement partners.
- Training – We are implementing a plan to train all staff in “run, hide, fight” tactics in order to be prepared for an active shooter situation. So far, all principals, vice principals, district office leaders (including me), and a number of teachers, counselors, campus supervisors, and other support staff have been trained. More full-day training sessions are scheduled.
- Collaboration with Law Enforcement – We couldn't do this important work without the support of the Amador County Sheriff's Office, Ione PD, Jackson PD and Sutter Creek PD. They are fantastic and help us greatly – with training and day-to-day incidents at the schools.
- Facilities Improvements – This is much-needed work in progress. Our school facilities are very old and most of the campuses are open. We have done some work like added fencing for security at a few sites and changed door locks for inside control, but there is much more to do. A bond measure would expedite this safety work through the renovation and upgrading of our schools.

Emotional safety is just as important as physical safety. When students don't feel a sense of belonging at school, they may disengage from the learning process and they may become unhealthy in some ways. For the past three years, we have taken many steps to address this.

Here are just a few of the steps we've taken:

- Focus on Social-Emotional Learning – This is one of our two goals in our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). (The other goal is about academic achievement.) Many services and actions have been added, such as teaching students problem solving skills, healthy ways to deal with stress and anxiety, how to recognize and deal with certain emotions, and more. Anti-bullying efforts are a big part of this.
- Professional Development – Many teachers and staff members have received training in trauma informed practices, how adverse childhood experiences affect learning, and best practices for use of new social-emotional learning curriculum.
- Added Counselors – All of our schools now have designated days for counselor support. Our school counselors are highly qualified and provide proactive support through classroom lessons and they are responsive to individual student needs as well.
- Enhanced School Clubs and Mentor Programs – Clubs have been added at the high schools based on student interest. Link Crew at the high schools and WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) at the junior high schools provide peer mentors for younger students and overall support through activities and healthy peer relationships.
- Increased Student Engagement and Motivation – We are seeing our students become more actively engaged inside and outside of the classroom. This happens as a result of higher expectations for student achievement, collaborative learning environments, and healthy adult-student relationships.

If parents/guardians have questions about this information, they may contact their child's principal. If members of the community who are not parents/guardian have questions, they may contact me at (209) 257-5353 or Mr. Sean Snider, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, at (209) 257-5334. As always, we thank you for your support!

Amy L. Slavensky, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Amador County Unified School District