



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

August 31, 2018

## **Message from Superintendent Dr. Ben Drati: School Safety and Security**

Dear SMMUSD staff, parents and community members,

On behalf of the school district, I want to say that it was an honor and pleasure working with your students in the 2017-18 school year. We are looking forward to another fruitful school year. We hope you had an opportunity to enjoy some well-deserved time with your loved ones over the summer break. I also want to welcome new families to the district and we look forward to serving your student.

The staff of SMMUSD uses the summer breaks to reflect on the experiences from previous years in an effort to improve for the following year. An area that has gained national attention that caused concern in our communities is school safety. We've had our share of incidents locally from an outbreak of norovirus, to extreme heat, to fires in the Los Angeles area. Fortunately, we have not had acts of extreme violence in our schools.

We understand that school safety is on the minds of students, parents, staff and community members and it's on our minds, too. We have safety plans in place at each of our schools that we consistently review, evaluate and practice. You can find our [general safety plan online](#). We are, however, in a constant state of learning as new information and research is revealed around school safety. This summer, we have convened meetings with our local law enforcement officials, specifically the Santa Monica Police Department and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department serving Malibu, in an effort to strengthen our relationships and practices. Our focus has been on reviewing our current safety plans and discussing additional preventative and proactive measures to protect our students and staff from acts of violence. We also took another critical look at our threat assessment protocols with our staff and local mental health professionals.

Based on our review and discussions, there are two focal areas we want to adjust and improve: our **prevention** and **physical protection** strategies.

The goals of **prevention** would be: reduction of school social factors that contribute to violent behavior, identification of students who are at risk for violent behavior and effective intervention to prevent acts of violence. Strategies we would engage in involve:

- Improving on positive educational environments free of bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Detection and intervention of bullying, harassment, abuse and other adverse behaviors.



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- Identification of students at risk for violent behavior and intervention to address needs.
- Threat assessment of students exhibiting indicators for imminent violent behavior and intervention to prevent adverse behavior.

The goals for **physical protection** would be: enhancing features that deny or impede campus access to a perpetrator of violence, establishing entrance controls that screen out potential perpetrators, and enhancing facilities that provide effective refuge from attack. Some strategies and measures include:

- Perimeter fencing used to channel access to designed entrances.
- Visitor controls that include installation of visitor verification equipment and procedures to control access.
  - To be more specific: We will equip elementary schools with electronic entrance door locks at the main entrances and establishing a parent visitation location at every elementary school and restricting parent drop-offs, pick-ups and congregation at that location.
  - Installation of camera surveillance systems at ALL sites providing visual verification of unauthorized entry.
- Doors and classrooms can be locked from inside.

It is unfortunate that talk of school safety is at the forefront of discussions in our nation. Be that as it may, we all must engage in the dialogue and work intelligently together. I'm proud and thankful for the input and involvement of our law enforcement, emergency and mental health professionals. We need the cooperation of our students, parents, and community as some of the actions we will undertake will change what people are accustomed to doing. We will continue to engage and seek the input of our families to help ensure the learning experience is safe, meaningful and enjoyable for our students.

Your principal will be explaining the specific prevention and physical protection safety measures for your sites and make the information as visible as possible for your understanding.

Have a great school year!

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent