



Essex County Public Schools

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February 23, 2018

Dear Essex County Public Schools Community,

As I watched the newscast of students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School advocate for greater safety of our students, I felt compelled to publicly respond. This senseless massacre weighs heavy on my heart, and I continue to pray for the victims, families, and community members touched by this atrocious act of violence. Certainly as a nation, we can do better: whether it is greater mental health efforts and/or more sensible regulation of assault weapons.

What I want to tell the community is that we take safety seriously. We have established an emergency plan, we practice actions consistent with the plan (seeking law enforcement critique of these procedures), and we try to make our facilities as safe as we can, while still being welcoming to our students and community. I am sorry to state that there is no way to guarantee absolute security, but we try to minimize the threat. Combating this threat will require the vigilance of all involved: if anyone sees something suspicious, report it; never allow people in doors other than a front entrance, etc. Security is the responsibility of all of us. Please be vigilant and urge our children to do the same.

In reflection of this terrible event, I am reminded of Billy Graham's words: "Sin is the second most powerful force in the universe, ... Only one force is greater—the love of God." By this grace, please partner with us to protect our most valuable assets – our children.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Burckbuchler, Ph.D.
Division Superintendent