
Connecticut Tragedy

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Subject : Connecticut Tragedy

To : howard elementary parents
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Dear Howard Families,

Our hearts go out to the families and community of Newtown, Connecticut. Any news like this is deeply saddening, and an event of this magnitude is especially horrifying.

We know that at a time like this, many parents want to know about the school safety and security measures we have in place.

- **Safety training & planning:** The Eugene School District has a nationally recognized emergency procedure plan that schools practice regularly. We train staff to handle the demands of emergencies, and all schools drill regularly for emergency responses for lockdowns, earthquakes, evacuations and more. Staff and students handle emergencies well when they have practiced what to do.
- **Strong relationship with police:** Through the School Resource Officers program, we have four police officers and a sergeant working full-time in our schools. Additional patrol officers can respond very quickly to a emergency situation. The school district and Eugene Police work together on all areas of emergency response, including making the best decisions together for student safety.
- **Fast, clear communications:** During an emergency, the district works with police and school staff to get accurate information about the situation and share it with parents as quickly as possible. We use email, cell phones, websites and other communication to notify parents, students and media with prompt and accurate information. It is critical that parents provide the school with complete and accurate contact information, so we can reach you if there is ever an emergency.
- **Continuous improvement:** While safety measures already are in place in our schools, we are committed to continuing to find ways to improve. The district is conducting safety assessments at every school, thoroughly reviewing physical security measures and safety procedures to ensure that our school buildings are as safe and secure as we can make them.

Our thoughts are with the families who lives have been forever changed by this

devastating event. We know it may have an impact on your family as well. You may find helpful the following suggestions for talking with your children about this tragedy.

With sadness,

Allan Chinn, Principal
Howard Elementary School

Talking to Children About Traumatic Events **by Naomi Zikmund-Fisher**

When violence, disaster or major accidents are in the news, it's often difficult to know what to say to your children. What follows are some general tips to help you help your children through whatever may be frightening them — and you.

If your kids are discussing it, you need to discuss it. If you don't, you send the message that it is too horrible to discuss, and that is terrifying to children. What kids imagine is worse than the facts.

Stick to the facts. After an event, there may be lots of rumors and unfounded information. Stick to what is known and say "We don't know" for the questions that don't have answers.

Emphasize that this is a big deal because it is unusual. Kids don't have the perspective we do as adults that what makes the news is the rare, not the common.

Everyone deals with fear and related feelings in their own way. Some kids don't want to talk about it. Some kids do. Some seem "inappropriate" in what they say. Respond to the feelings and not the content — a kid who says, "That was so cool!" shouldn't be reprimanded. Just say, "I'm sure those people were really scared" or "I was scared when I heard about it." They need you to model that it's ok to talk about the feelings.

Don't dwell on it. When the main facts and feelings have come out, it's time to get on with your regular routine. Make sure kids know you're available to talk later if they want.

Short term normal reactions include changes in appetite and sleep. It may also turn up in children's artwork and in conversations about other frightening or sad things they have experienced. All of these things should fade as time goes on. If they don't, you may wish to consult your pediatrician or someone in the mental health field.

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"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou
