



February 20, 2018

Dear Students, Parents, Staff and Community Members:

As news of the latest school shooting floods the media, we again see the faces of children, parents, and school staff shocked by another school tragedy. This time we see terrified children and hear gun shots as teens capture the event live on social media. We cannot accept these tragedies as a normal part of life in America.

As Superintendents of the public schools in Gratiot and Isabella Counties, we believe it is important for you to know we are diligently working to prevent school shootings and other types of violence in our schools. Over the past few years, our schools have participated in multiple trainings and built strong and supportive relationships with law enforcement and other first responders. They have advised us on how to better secure our schools in a variety of ways. For example, across our counties, we have limited access to buildings, secured entries, and added additional security cameras. We know that students learn best in safe and secure environments.

We cannot keep our schools safe without the help and support of our entire community. We urge you to learn about the warning signs connected with school shooters in the United States. They include violent fantasies, anger problems, fascination with weapons, being a loner, suicidal or homicidal ideation, stalking, interest in previous shootings, paranoia, violence and cruelty, acting out, police contact, mental health issues, use of alcohol and drugs, and unusual interest in police, military, and terrorist activities. Experts say a single warning sign by itself might not be significant, but a cluster of warning signs is much more serious.

Please make sure your child knows they must tell a trusted adult immediately if they feel their school is threatened in any way. This includes sharing information about weapons or threatening acts of violence in person or online.

Finally, we need your support in helping our children cope with the painful feelings that may be triggered by last week's tragedy in Florida. The National Association of School Psychologists has provided tips for parents. Help your child express their feelings by making the time to ask them questions, listen, and then help them process by pointing out safeguards and what to do during an emergency.

Across Gratiot and Isabella Counties, please know that we stand united as a community against all acts of violence. We are stronger and safer when we work together as students, parents, staff, and community members.

Sincerely,

The Superintendents of Gratiot and Isabella County Public Schools:

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Donalynn Ingersoll, Alma Public Schools
Jeffrey Rohrer, Ashley Community Schools
Jennifer Verleger, Mt. Pleasant Public Schools
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