



500 Main Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701

March 27, 2018

Letter from the Eau Claire School Board & Superintendent Mary Ann Hardebeck

The Eau Claire Area School District (ECASD) is tasked with providing for the safety and welfare of its students and to educate students in a safe and nurturing learning environment. In light of recent horrific events occurring in America's schools as well as recent threats in Eau Claire, we wanted to write a letter to talk about our desire for change and the steps that we must take moving forward.

Locally, we believe the public schools in Eau Claire are a safe place for our students and staff. We believe that stopping school violence involves using multiple prevention strategies that address the individual, community, and societal factors that influence the likelihood of violence. Prevention efforts should ultimately reduce risk factors and promote protective factors.

We will continue to work to ensure the highest level of safety possible. Below you will find a list of continual efforts made by the ECASD to ensure our students are safe.

- The School Board is committed to various services that are supportive and preventative in nature, including school counseling, mentorship, nursing, mental health, and social work services. The School Board will continue to monitor the staffing of these programs to ensure that buildings are adequately staffed and student needs are being met.
- School Resource Officer (SRO) Program: For more than 30 years, our District has worked collaboratively with the Eau Claire Police Department. The School Board is working with the Eau Claire Police Department and Sheriff's Office to facilitate communication and clarify the role of the SRO, not as a school-based disciplinarian, but around building relationships with students and families, being a resource to students and staff for law enforcement education, and helping ECASD to maintain the security of its schools and facilities. The School Board appreciates this longstanding and close collaboration.
- School Environments: Our schools take numerous steps to enhance school environments in order to promote learning and to reduce negative outcomes, such as school violence. These strategies include supporting effective classroom management, providing educators with the support they need to best meet the needs of all students, promoting cooperative learning techniques, and supporting robust opportunities for family engagement.

- Facility Security Features: All visitors have to register with the front office before having access to School District buildings. All volunteers in school events are required to pass a comprehensive background check. All District staff and substitutes prominently display District ID badges at all times when at school or at another District facility. ECASD has digital cameras throughout our schools to monitor activity inside and out. Through this system, we have seen a noticeable decline in vandalism at our schools. Video images have maintained safe learning environments for students and staff. All exterior building doors are remotely controlled and/or monitored. This allows for quicker response time in the event of an emergency in which doors need to be accessed or locked.
- Safety Team: The District safety team develops plans, procedures, and equipment to ensure that each employee and student is doing a necessary part to avoid unsafe practices.
- Digital Citizenship: The District Digital Citizenship curriculum promotes safe online behavior and appropriate, effective, online collaboration with others.
- Emergency Training: Each District building conducts a variety of emergency preparedness trainings each semester. Such trainings include “shelter” for severe weather; “evacuation” for fire emergencies; “reverse evacuation” for dangerous issues requiring an expeditious return to the building; “lockdown” in which an imminent danger towards students exists within the school property; and, “lockout” in which there is a dangerous situation away from the campus, but which could impact the campus (during lockout, routines within the school are maintained; however, doors are secured, with no one entering or leaving the facility, and no outside activities, such as recess or field days, are permitted). All ECASD staff are trained on emergency preparedness and response through the Incident Command System.
- Multi-hazard Emergency Operations Plan: This plan encompasses many issues designed to prepare the District for a multiplicity of emergency events. School crisis management teams discuss these issues throughout the year in order to be prepared to respond in a timely and accurate manner should the need arise.
- Crisis Communications Plan: The District has a robust system in place whereby key administrators are informed of an emergency situation. In turn, parents and other stakeholders can be informed within mere moments through the use of Skyward Messenger and other forms of social media. The goal is to quickly and accurately communicate essential information to first responders, District staff, and parents and community members to ensure the safety of all students.

Moving forward, the Eau Claire School Board supports firearm accountability and safety measures which include Universal Background Checks. We also support legislation to reinstate the revenue limit adjustment for school districts that develop a school safety plan with a local law enforcement agency. School districts across Wisconsin could use such additional revenue to purchase school safety equipment, pay additional security officers, and cover the cost of school safety measures that are identified in the School District's school safety plan. Ultimately, our students and staff need to be protected by our government and our lawmakers.

High profile acts of violence, particularly in schools, can confuse and frighten children who may feel in danger or worry that their friends or loved ones are at risk. They will look to adults for information and guidance on how to react. Parents and school personnel can help children feel safe by establishing a sense of normalcy and security and talking with them about their fears. It is important to reassure children that they are safe, help put their feelings into perspective, and assist them in expressing these feelings appropriately.

Above everything else, we would like to see more opportunities for students to be heard. Let their questions be your guide. Some children prefer writing, playing music, or doing an art project as an outlet. Others may be interested in writing letters to their legislator or being an activist in their community.

The recent tragedy in Parkland highlights the importance of ensuring that our community stays connected and vigilant in reporting concerns about suspicious or concerning behaviors. Rest assured that safety is our top priority, and we will continue to work together as a community to ensure that our students are protected.

Sincerely,

Eau Claire School Board Members &
Superintendent Mary Ann Hardebeck

Helpful Links:

[Centers for Disease Control: School Violence Prevention](#)

[National Association of School Psychologists: Talking to Children about Violence](#)

[National PTA: School Safety](#)