



Regional School Unit No. 18

41 Heath Street Oakland, ME 04963 ~ Telephone 207.465.7384 ~ Fax 207.465.7384

Carl Gartley
Superintendent

Keith Morin
Chief Academic Officer

Gary Smith
Chief Operations Officer

To the families of RSU 18 and to all of our community members:

In the last couple of days I have heard from several people regarding concerns about the tragic event that took place in Florida earlier this week. One of the main themes and questions I have taken from these conversations is that people want and need answers. This is such a powerful statement, and I wish had them for everyone. Not only to give answers to our staff and students, but as you know our state and our country are searching for answers as well. Unfortunately, like everyone else, we struggle to understand why and how these horrific school shootings take place. Keeping staff and students safe is so very important, which is why I am reaching out today.

Like all the schools in Maine, there are many things happening to increase safety: fire drills, lockdown drills, locking as many exterior doors as practically possible, buzz in systems, visibility of our police resource officers and administrators, etc. We work annually with our resource officers and local first responders to review our safety plan in order to make improvements. We often invite the police or fire department into our schools during drills to provide us feedback. These procedures are effective, but we know alone they are not a complete solution.

If you have been at any of our public meetings in the last couple of years you will have heard us mention that our goal is to meet the needs of every student in every school on every day. Yes, this of course has a lot to do with the academics of our students. But there is so much more to this. One of the best tools we have to prevent such tragedies is our front line staff that interact and work with students on a daily basis. Teachers, ed techs, bus drivers, counselors, administrators, custodians, nutrition workers and coaches, they can and do make a difference. Our goal is for every student to have an adult they have a positive relationship with. We know our students well. We want to know when they are hurting. We want every student to have someone they are comfortable with sharing information if they suspect something bad might happen.

This year as I have been collecting requests from administrators, it is clear to me that safety is a priority in our schools. Here are some of the things that our principals have requested for next year, all prior to this week. Expanding our JMG program, this is a program that does amazing work to engage students who sometimes feel disconnected. Increase the number of social workers we have in our schools. These are people who are trained to recognize when students are struggling, and provide them with resources. Increase the number of teachers for needy students. We know that having an educational system where any student feels like a second-class citizen is bad



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for everyone. To me it is clear that our district understands the connection between meeting the needs of students and keeping our schools safe.

I thoroughly enjoy spending time walking through all of the schools in our district. Our staff is unbelievably dedicated to making connections with students, and having engaging classes. We have intervention programs in place because nobody wants to come to school feeling they cannot be successful. We offer a wide variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular classes so we can find ways to connect with every student and get them involved. Along with good policy and procedures, this is what I see as the path to having safe schools. With a positive school climate, strong parent involvement and the right supports in place we will continue to do everything we can to keep our school community safe.

Thank you,

Carl Gartley
Superintendent of Schools, RSU 18