

WESTHILL CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parents,

Today was meant to signal the Friday before a much-anticipated winter break. While that is still the case, sadly we are all reacting to the horror and disbelief of yet another school shooting in our nation. It's impossible not to ask ourselves if our children are safe at our school. Here are some of the steps taken at the Westhill schools to protect our children.

There is a district-wide safety plan that is reviewed annually that acts as our guideline.

<http://www.westhillschools.org/tfiles/folder1103/District%20Safety%20Plan%202017%2018.pdf>

This is developed in partnership with our BOCES safety office, police and fire agencies, and the district safety committee. Safety plans are practiced throughout the year in each building, including lockout, and lockdown drills. In December, the administrative team received "Active Shooter" training by the NYS Police. This training has been scheduled for all staff on our March 16th professional development day with the NYS Police. We will continue to practice our lockdown drills, many of which are conducted in coordination with law enforcement and first responders.

Students themselves can be the strongest force of protection. Too often we hear that someone didn't want to say anything in case they were wrong. If you see something, hear something, or sense something, speak up. Tell a teacher, the principal, or any adult in the building. This is a message we continue to share with students, and your reinforcement of that message can only help.

Along those lines, we seek assistance in reinforcing that no one opens a door for anyone. All visitors must enter through the single point of entrance at each building. We have secure entrances in each building. We ask everyone's assistance in honoring that protocol.

We continue to enhance our building security through training, installing technical solutions to door entry systems, and enhancing our camera surveillance systems. In coordination of our current capital project and funding secured through the Smart Bond Act, our camera system upgrade installation is underway.

That said, it could be a difficult time to talk with children about these horrifying acts of violence. Attached is a talking points resource you may find helpful. In addition, please don't hesitate to reach out to the student service providers within the district. The school principal, school psychologists, social worker, nurses, and guidance staff stand ready to assist in any way possible.

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers>

May your winter break be peaceful, safe and enjoyable.

Sincerely,



Casey Barduhn
Superintendent of Schools

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"Westhill . . . Where Educational Excellence is a Tradition"
www.westhillschools.org