



Griffith Public Schools

Interim Superintendent of Schools/
Assistant Superintendent, District Discipline Advisor
Michele Riise

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March 5, 2018

Dear Griffith Public Schools Community:

The Griffith Public Schools have always placed our highest level of priority on the safety and security of our buildings. In light of heightened concerns about safety following the recent tragedy in Parkland, Florida, I want to take this opportunity to share with our community that the variety of measures is extensive, and the majority of our efforts focus on building a stronger school community through communication, respect, and responsibility. We work hard to foster an environment where all are comfortable to say something if they see or hear anything.

Every day, we use a variety of systems to keep our students safe. There is just a single entrance open in each building throughout the day while all other doors are locked and secured. When visitors arrive, they enter through a controlled double point of entry system that is fully staffed during normal school hours. Visitors receive photo ID badges that they are required to wear throughout their stay, and their names are checked against a national sex offender database. Inside our buildings, the district has equipped our administrators, directors, and office staff with radios that are utilized for communication purposes. In addition, cameras are located throughout the buildings to ensure that not only our administrators, but also our School Resource Officer (SRO) have the ability to monitor the building 24/7 in the event of an emergency and in real time.

This physical security is enhanced by the relationship we maintain with our local first responders. Our School Resource Officer (SRO) Griffith Police Officer is stationed at the MS/HS within our district. The SRO is not only a visible presence at the school but serves as an important liaison between the school district and first responders as well as a valuable resource for improving and enhancing the district's security protocols and response. To further assist our first responders, we have labeled every entrance to each of our buildings so they know precisely which entrance to use when responding to an emergency. Just as last Friday, our law enforcement agencies continue to utilize our MS/HS to conduct joint training exercises during unoccupied times or conduct a building-wide search, as they deem necessary, due to recent rise of threats throughout the state of Indiana. Each month, our administrative team meets with Griffith Police Department representatives to address issues and concerns, as well as plan training and drills.

Beyond these relationships, we know that the best security comes from within. That is why we perform regular **unannounced** lockdown and fire drills with our faculty, staff, and students. The district has also developed extensive emergency preparedness procedures and a School Guard app that is available to all faculty and staff and utilized during each and every drill. In addition, all new employees, including teachers and administrators, are required to complete background checks. While in school, all staff members are required to wear an identification badge at all times. All students authorize to drive to

school and all employees are provided a car tag so that law enforcement can easily detect vehicles that are not driven by employees or students.

In addition, our staff has been instructed to limit the number of students who are in the hallways during class periods. First of all, research states that the more engaged time students have within the classroom the higher they achieve. There is also a heightened safety concern that exists when students are not in classrooms during instructional time. In fact, when students are routinely let out of class, unsupervised, they are more apt to do destructive things and make bad choices.

Lastly, our school board approved, prior to the Florida school shooting, a safety audit to be completed by an outside company this spring. During this audit, the team will review district and school emergency procedures, monitor drop off and pick up locations and procedures at each building, check the safety and security at each building, including but not limited to cameras, availability of storage rooms to outsiders, and building access after school hours, and provide suggestions for the district and school board to consider to increase our security level.

But even with these measures, we understand that we can always do better. We will consider further security and safety upgrades as part of the safety audit. As always, if you have any questions or concerns about your child's safety, please do not hesitate to call your building principal or my office. Together, we will work to ensure that our students are safe and secure while getting a rich, fulfilling education.

Putting Children First,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michele A. Riise".

Michele A. Riise
Interim Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent/Discipline Advisor