

SOUTH WINDSOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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D R E A M . A C H I E V E . I N S P I R E .

February 16, 2018

Dear Families:

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing to families following the horrific and tragic school shooting in Parkland, Florida, an event that has become unfathomably commonplace in our country. I know our community joins me in keeping the victims and their families in our thoughts as they navigate this unimaginable grief. As the news coverage unfolds throughout the weekend, your children will undoubtedly have questions and experience a range of emotions. Please know our staff, particularly school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers, will be ready to support your children as they return to school on Tuesday. Please be sure to contact your child's teacher, counselor, or principal if you feel your child is in need of specialized support. As your superintendent of schools my heart is filled with profound sadness, but my head remains focused on keeping our children physically and emotionally safe.

While we already have school security protocols in place, as do all districts across the country, I want to assure you that we continually re-examine these protocols and make improvements. Our school security and safety plan is submitted to the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Homeland Security annually. We continue to make investments in our infrastructure such as cameras and point of entry systems. We have a strong and positive relationship with the South Windsor Police Department and South Windsor Fire Department, and will continue to partner with them when refining our school safety procedures.

Over the past eight years I have occasionally been asked by parents if I can guarantee their child's safety. I have never wavered from what is the only honest response: no, I cannot guarantee it. It would be disingenuous to suggest that there are not forces beyond our control. What I can guarantee is that we are committed to doing everything within our control to keep our kids safe. The caring adults who serve your children on a daily basis consider it a privilege to have your trust and support. We protect that which you cherish most and we take that responsibility seriously.

The following is an excerpt from a parent letter I wrote five years ago after the heartbreaking tragedy in Newtown:

On Monday, I visited all of our seven schools. I saw parents' faces lined with worry, teachers masterfully mask their pain in front of their students, adult tears instantly replaced with a smile to protect the innocence of our young and unknowing learners. I saw older students demonstrating compassion as they tried to identify ways to help a community in their unimaginable grief. I saw our younger children laughing, playing, learning, questioning, problem-solving, singing and skipping. I have had the privilege of attending an elementary school concert every night this week. The voices of our young learners offered a healing quality to the grandparents, parents and siblings in the audience. All of us have been reminded of the fragility of life. This reminder should bolster our commitment to each other and our willingness to show kindness to one another.

The theme from the aforementioned paragraph is as important today as it was five years ago. We must not let our disbelief over this seemingly unstoppable epidemic of violence, nor our despair over so many young lives lost, diminish our capacity for kindness. We live in uncertain times and although it is becoming increasingly difficult, we must, for our children's sake, continue to find the good in this world. In addition to the multitude of security protocols, drills, training and vigilance that take place in our schools every day, we will also work equally hard to ensure that our schools continue to be places of love, laughter, and learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "KATE CARTER". The letters are in all caps and have a slightly cursive, hand-drawn appearance.

Kate Carter, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools