



March 8, 2018

Op-Ed for the Rochester Post-Bulletin
Michael Muñoz, Superintendent
Rochester Public Schools

Like all of you, I watched with sadness and horror as another school shooting unfolded in our country. We all grieve for those involved in this tragedy. In the climate caused by this event, we acknowledge school communities across our country face concerns for student safety. I want to assure you the safety of our students and staff in Rochester Public Schools is our highest priority. Any and all concerns are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

Over the past few years, Rochester Public Schools has taken many steps to improve the safety of students, staff, and visitors when they are in our buildings. For several years, we partnered with Educator's School Safety Network to provide training for staff on Lockdown Alternatives and Enhancement (Active Shooter Response Training), Threat Assessment Management, and Parent Reunification. Threat assessment is a methodology to determine who is at risk, determine how severe the risk is, and then provide appropriate supports and interventions.

We have also taken many steps to improve our buildings. All buildings have a single point of entry. Four years ago, we installed security cameras with buzzer and intercom lock systems at the main entrance of our elementary and middle schools. This system provides staff with the ability to view visitors via surveillance cameras and communicate with them before they are able to enter the office area. Our high schools also have security cameras in place, and a single point of entrance with a staffed reception area. In addition, every school is equipped with the Raptor® visitor identification system. The schools use this system to scan the visitor's driver's license or other form of ID. The system runs this data through a comprehensive national sex offender data base. Once a visitor has been approved through this system, the visitor will receive a visitor badge which is expected to be worn through the duration of the visit.

Additionally, we are grateful for relationships with community partners, such as the Rochester Police Department, which support our buildings and students. Our district continues to enhance our safety planning and preparedness through the use of research, trainings, and staff development. It is only through practicing lockdowns, fire drills, and other scenarios that students and staff can be prepared for an emergency.

While it is devastating to think of a violent act being attempted in one of our schools, it is important to remember that our students, parents, and staff are our best line of defense. We rely on our entire school community to inform a school office if they are aware of any threat so we can thoroughly investigate, as we take all reports seriously.

What can parents do?

- Talk to your child about reporting concerns to district staff or law enforcement.
- Be aware of your surroundings. If something does not seem right, report it.
- If you have firearms or weapons in your home, please secure them.
- Stay informed.
- Listen to your child and help them process any concerns they may have.
- Model appropriate behavior. Demonstrate healthy ways to express anger and relieve stress.
- Get to know your child's friends and families. Establish a network to exchange information with other parents.
- Monitor and supervise your child's reading materials, television, video games and music for appropriate content.
- Monitor and supervise your child's use of the internet.
- If you see something, say something.

Please know that Rochester Public Schools have student and staff safety as our top priority. We understand that a student who does not feel safe cannot learn. I look forward to our partnership as we continue to make RPS a safe and secure place for our children. Thank you for your support and trust in our district.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Muñoz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Muñoz, Superintendent