



HARBOR BEACH  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
402 S 5<sup>TH</sup> ST HARBOR BEACH MI 48441 989 479 3261

December 4, 2021

Dear Harbor Beach Schools Families,

By now likely the vast majority of you are well aware of Michigan's Oxford High School school shooting from earlier this week. This tragedy is a reminder to all of us that school safety and security is not something to take lightly. For what it's worth, I wanted to share with you a little about Harbor Beach Community Schools thoughts related to school crises.

Obviously, our highest and first priority is to maintain the safety of all students and staff at all times. We have many district resources available to us in and outside of the school. We have a truly amazing and strong relationship with our Harbor Beach Police Department and Fire Department. They are in constant communication with us and us with them. Harbor Beach Community Schools continue to provide numerous mental health supports for all individuals working, learning, and playing on our campus. Mental health supports are vitally important to the success of all children and staff. In Harbor Beach we are fortunate to have DHHS support (Lynne Siemen), and Harbor Beach Community Hospital supports, such as nursing (Tally Hogue) and social work (Andrea Cleland and Issac Viers) with us full-time on campus. These are amazing assets for HBCS and are only part of the programming and supports we offer. Additionally, we have multiple supports related to counseling, psychology, and teacher consultation provided through partnerships with the Huron Intermediate School District. In the 5 years I've been superintendent we've worked heavily on Social Emotional Wellness recognizing that building positive relationships with children is always the most significant single thing we can do to help children feel safe and understood. In fact, Social Emotional Wellness is the 1st of 3 district goals that are at the center of our work with children.

Parents, students, and the community can contribute to keeping students safe, happy, and healthy, too. Having age-appropriate conversations with children about their feelings and about how to handle relationships, disappointments, and stress is vital. It is critical that we all assure students that sharing with adults if they hear about self destructive or threatening behavior is not "snitching"; it could very well save a life.

May I also suggest that we each practice sensitivity to others and practice the golden rule: "treat others as you would like to be treated," especially in how each of us handles stress. Please be understanding, forgiving, and patient with each other. Remember, we are all doing the best we can (parents, students, and staff alike). We are experiencing an extremely stressful time at the moment and all on the backdrop of the holidays, which are already stressful times of their own.

Additionally, please know that the school will provide information and updates when appropriate. We will always be purposeful when and if we present statements. Along this line, we are keenly aware that releasing information too early can impair ongoing investigations. Plus, providing statements prematurely and/or with great frequency can accidentally give oxygen to those craving negative attention. Obviously we want parents to be informed but need to strike the right balance as to not give attention to those who desire attention for negative and harmful acts.

Lastly, I will attempt here to thread the needle on giving you reassurance while at the same time not giving those who desire the worst sort of attention the oxygen they crave. Let me share this purposely simple statement— At no point during the last 3 days have I or HBPD felt our school district should close due to possible school violence. We take every threat seriously and work closely with HBPD throughout every year by planning and practicing crisis/emergency drills



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and by investigating and responding to potential threats. If someone makes a threat against a school, he or she will have consequences that are not limited to school suspension or expulsion; they can include legal actions and consequences outside of school as well. **These consequences will impact the rest of his or her life.** Further, someone always talks, and those with negative intent are always brought into the light.

Please know that we love your children as if they are our own. We will continue to review and refine our practices to keep them safe. We thank you for allowing us the extraordinary privilege of working with your most valuable possessions, your children.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shawn Bishop, Superintendent  
Harbor Beach Community Schools