

LEE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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*The Lee County School District in partnership with students, parents, and the community,
shall assure an excellent education for each and every child.*

December 17, 2012

Dear Parents,

We are deeply troubled and sorrowful to hear of the great tragedy in Connecticut at an elementary school on Friday. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Sandy Hook Elementary School community that was devastated by the loss of their children and educators. The news accounts are reporting a large number of fatalities, many of which are elementary-age-students, a principal and teachers. The shooter is also reported to be dead.

Our children and staff are our most precious resource and to that end, we take this tragedy as a stark reminder of the importance of our safety procedures and our check-in process for all visitors to our schools. While there is no indication that this is anything but an isolated incident far away from Lee County Schools, we do want to take this opportunity to remind all of our families that we conduct regular drills, including those for a building lockdown. All visitors to our schools must enter and sign in with the school office. Other exterior doors to the buildings remain locked at all times and only staff can access those doors.

These are just a few of the procedures that we have in place to help ensure student safety and security. Certainly in this day and age we can never be absolutely protected against all circumstances, but we do educate staff throughout the year, practice and revise our safety plan and rely on our parents, first responders and the community to help us practice and respond using our safety procedures.

We know that children may raise questions and concerns about this tragedy. The American Psychological Association (APA) recommends several tips for parents to consider:

Talk with your child -

If children ask questions, talking to them about their worries and concerns is the first step to help them feel safe and begin to cope with the events occurring around them. What you talk about and how you say it does depend on their age, but all children need to be able to know you are there and listening to them.

Keep home a safe place -

Children, regardless of age, often find home to be a safe haven when the world around them becomes overwhelming. During times of crisis, it is important to remember that your children may come home seeking the safe feeling they have being there.

Watch for signs of stress, fear or anxiety -

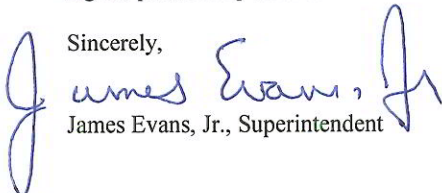
After a traumatic event, it is typical for children (and adults) to experience a wide range of emotions including fearfulness, shock, anger, grief and anxiety. Your children's behaviors may change because of their response to the event. They may experience trouble sleeping, difficulty with concentrating on schoolwork, or changes in appetite. This is normal for everyone and should begin to disappear in a few months.

Take "news breaks" - Your children may want to keep informed by gathering information about the event from the internet, television, or newspapers. It is important to limit the amount of time spent watching the news because constant exposure may actually heighten their anxiety and fears. Other resources can be found at www.kysafeschools.org.

Giving your child back a sense of routine is a critical part of "getting back" to normal. Over the next few days we will be prepared to assist your child if they have questions. If you have any questions or concerns, you are always welcome to contact the school principal. Please know we have a school counselor at each school who can assist parents in talking with their children or answering questions. Feel free to contact the Lee County Central Office if you have further questions. We will continue to keep you informed on our website and through letters as other safety issues occur. Our students and your children are our most precious resource and their safety is our priority and we will continue to be ever diligent in that effort.

Again, please keep all those involved in your thoughts in prayers today and in future days.

Sincerely,


James Evans, Jr., Superintendent