



A Texas Recognized School District

October 10, 2006

Jack Beckham, Jr.
Ken Donnell
Lee Giddens
Lynn Kirkpatrick
Tom Knouse
Rhonda Lowe
Donna Thomas

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Arnold Adair
Superintendent

Like many others across our nation, our thoughts and prayers are with the children, families, and communities affected by the tragic shootings that took place at three different schools during the last few weeks. These incidents remind us that, although instruction is our business, we must first provide a safe environment for our children and employees. I want to reassure you that we continually review our safety and security plans and policies, and we work very closely with city, county, and state safety experts in that regard. No safety plan is perfect because we always look for ways to improve it.

For example, with the community's support of our 1998 and 2005 bond elections, we were able to add significant safety and security improvements to our schools. Upgraded surveillance cameras are being added to our existing camera system. We installed a visitor identification system in all of our buildings. We have already renovated the entrances of two schools---Dabbs Elementary and Parkwood Elementary---to make them more secure.

But, ultimately, school safety comes down to people and relationships. First, though our employees are trained to respond quickly and appropriately to a variety of emergencies, we depend on parents, students, and community members to help keep our buildings safe. You see a perspective of our schools that we do not, and I encourage you to share any safety concerns with your school principal.

Second, perhaps more than anything else, relationships can be the most important thing that keeps our schools safe. Research reveals that children who are involved in their schools are less likely to perform acts of violence, and we work hard to provide a wide variety of activities for children. In our schools, we work with children to encourage the 40 Developmental Assets, which are characteristics such as integrity and responsibility that help young people make good decisions. [For more information about Developmental Assets, contact your school counselor or go to www.search-institute.org/assets/ on the Internet.] We also encourage students and community members to report suspicious behavior by their peers or adults. I cannot emphasize the importance of this point enough; in many incidents involving school violence, the perpetrator commented on his plans long before he acted on them. If you or anyone in your family knows of a child or adult who has exhibited suspicious behavior, please report this information to the district or local law enforcement authorities. If you'd like to remain anonymous, you may do so by contacting Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS (8477).

I know that this letter is very serious in tone, but I hope you understand that we take the issue of school safety very seriously. Thank you for supporting our schools, and, as always, we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Arnold Adair,
Superintendent of Schools