

From: Superintendent
Sent: Friday, December 14, 2012 11:50 AM
To: EPS.MailList
Subject: How to help our students
Importance: High

Dear colleague:

This morning we awoke to reports of a shooting at an elementary school in Connecticut. While there are unconfirmed details about the circumstances, we do know that an incidence of this magnitude is troubling to adults and children as we struggle to understand why tragedies such as this occur.

Over the past few years we have built, strengthened and practiced our school and facility emergency preparedness plans. We have practiced and trained to respond with confidence. Students and staff have shown exemplary response to the lock down situations we have experienced. Our emergency response plans are coordinated with the Everett Police Department and the Snohomish County Sheriff's office and the state department of Emergency Management. We have been briefed by OSPI, the Governor's office and emergency services. Our preparedness and practices can source of reassurance to staff, students and families.

I ask each of you to join with me in maintaining a clear and stable focus on our mission—the education of the students entrusted to us. Each of us can help maintain a healthy educational climate and help reduce anxiety in our students by keeping our schools as normal as possible – especially at a time when other parts of the world are uncertain.

School guidance counselors remind us that as caring adults, we can make the difference between being overwhelmed by circumstances we cannot control and developing critical life-long emotional and coping skills.

Here are a few suggestions for helping to make students feel safe: (these can be as helpful to us as school staff as they are to families whose children this weekend will be asking questions and needing to talk.)

- Turn off or monitor the television. Endless news programs are likely to heighten anxiety, and young children cannot distinguish between images on television and their personal reality.
- Maintain a normal routine.
- Stick to facts. Answer questions factually.
- Remain calm and reassuring. Children take their cues from their parents and adults.
- Be optimistic.
- Be a good listener and observer. Pay attention to changes in behavior.
- Take care of yourself. You are better able to help your students if you are coping well. If you are anxious or upset, your students are more likely to be so as well.

Thank you to the support staff throughout the district, all of whom enable teachers and students to be successful by maintaining systems and infrastructure necessary to school operations.

Thank you to those on the front lines of education: teachers, paraeducators and principals who work each day to facilitate student learning through inspiration and innovation in the classroom. In a world of uncertainty, it is comforting to work together with you in this world's most important work, which includes helping students feel safe.

Warm regards,
Gary