

October 19, 2006

Student safety is top priority

By Debra Bowers, Ph D., Superintendent, St. Louis Park Public School District

The safety and well-being of our students and staff are our top priority, and due to recent local and national events, our awareness has been heightened even further.

We ask students to be our eyes and ears. They play a key role in keeping schools safe, and it is crucial that students are comfortable in freely sharing critical information with an adult when a potentially dangerous situation exists. Earlier this month, students shared concerns with adults. Adults listened, and, after a thorough investigation, administrators, working with St. Louis Park police officers, found the reports to be unfounded.

As a result, our community has become a safer place to learn, live and work. We are becoming more prepared for all types of emergencies. Our students know that adults will listen to their concerns. All of our staff members have increased their focus on building security, making sure doors are locked and visitors are properly identified and directed to offices as they enter our buildings.

We have hired additional security staff at the high school and student movement has been restricted. School administrators and members of local law enforcement have teamed up to address safety and security within our schools. We, along with all schools in Minnesota, will soon begin lock-down drills in addition to our fire drills. We are standardizing our procedures and have updated our crisis management plan, and we are ready to respond to all kinds of emergencies.

We must all be vigilant. The more people involved, the safer our community will be. Parents: You can help by talking to your students. Reinforce with them that you will listen to their concerns.

Each of our schools will be hosting discussions about safety and security. All of us, working together, demonstrate how our community makes Children First a reality. We welcome your input at one of the following meetings:

Senior High Parent Advisory Council meeting, 7 p.m., Monday, November 20, in room A204 of the senior high, 6425 West 33rd Street.

Junior High Site Council meeting, 4 p.m. Wednesday, November 8, in the junior high media center, 2025 Texas Ave. S.

Aquila/Cedar Manor PTO meeting, 4 p.m. Thursday, November 2, in the Cedar Manor media center, 9400 Cedar Lake Road.

Park Spanish Immersion (PSI) Site Council meeting, 4 p.m. Thursday, October 26 in the PSI media center, 6300 Walker Street.

Peter Hobart Site Council meeting, 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 31 in the Peter Hobart media center, 6500 West 26th Street.

Susan Lindgren PTSO meeting 7 p.m. Thursday, October 26 in the Susan Lindgren media center, 4801 West 41st Street.