



William S. Hart Union High School District

Good evening Hart District families,

This is Mike Kuhlman, Deputy Superintendent, with a special message to the Hart District community.

It has been nearly two months since that terrible day at Saugus High School. Despite the passage of time, we remain heartsick over those injured and lost. We recognize that many in our community continue to grapple with the fear and anxiety that understandably follows from such a traumatic event.

The purpose of this message is to share some of the work that has been done, and the plans that have been put in place, since the tragedy on November 14. We are determined to appropriately REMEMBER and honor the memories of the victims. We are committed to minister to the needs of those physically and emotionally impacted by this crisis – and to put supports in place to help them fully RECOVER. We have initiated a process to REINFORCE our threat assessment policies and procedures in an effort to further enhance our plan to keep our schools safe.

REMEMBRANCE

As we begin to write a new chapter for the Hart District, it feels appropriate to start by recognizing, once again, that there are families in our community whose hearts are broken and whose wounds will never fully heal after the loss of their cherished loved ones. Words feel inadequate in the presence of such profound sorrow. We do hope that there is some comfort in the unprecedented outpouring of support that has flowed from this tragedy. On behalf of the Hart District Governing Board, we sincerely thank everyone for the countless acts of kindness that have been showered on the students, staff and families affected by this crisis. In defiance of this unspeakably evil act, we draw courage, strength and hope from seeing the better angels of our nature on display in Santa Clarita.

RECOVERY

Even before the incident at Saugus, the Hart District recognized the need to prioritize mental health. Since 2012, the Hart District has deployed approximately 50 therapists to serve the mental health needs of the children of the Santa Clarita Valley. This past year, the District hired a Mental Health Coordinator (Ms. Sarah Gilberts), opened wellness centers across the valley, and designated site coordinators to help expand the reach of our mental health professionals. The Hart District employs seven social workers and one Child Welfare Specialist to help meet the growing need and we've invested in professional development to equip staff to employ trauma-informed teaching and counseling practices.

This brief message cannot capture all the mental health supports we have put in place. It does not do justice to the countless individuals in our District who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to meet the extraordinary need, and it does not address the severe budgeting challenge that comes from investing in an area that is not fully funded by the State.

It is however intended to provide some comfort in recognizing that the Hart District was prepared to respond to the unprecedented crisis of a school shooting. Our mental health infrastructure enabled us to respond quickly and

efficiently to the tragedy on November 14. Dr. Nicholas Betty, our clinical coordinator in charge of intensive counseling services, immediately reached out to his contacts at the City of Santa Clarita, the County of Los Angeles, the Department of Mental Health, the Child and Family Center, and elsewhere to expand access to crisis counseling services. By accessing local, state and federal resources, we've accelerated the introduction of wellness centers across the District, we've hired additional counselors and we are pursuing options for additional funding to expand access to mental health services. We are committed to finding a way to help students and staff return to baseline and move forward in a positive direction.

One of the most critical mental health supports we've been able to secure is the assistance of Dr. David Schonfeld, the Director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at USC. Dr. Schonfeld is recognized as the preeminent expert in the field, having participated in the recovery efforts at practically all of the recent incidences of school violence in the U.S. - including Sandy Hook, Columbine and Marjory Stoneman Douglas. With his unique experience and expertise, he is exactly the right person to provide the consultation and training necessary to help us move down the path to recovery. He has already spent considerable time counseling parents, teachers and administrators impacted by the crisis and has committed to stay with us through the challenges of the months and years to come.

(Full qualifications of the *Dr. David Schonfeld* are included below)

Dr. Schonfeld will be sharing a presentation to parents on trauma, grief and recovery and answering questions on January 16 at the Saugus High School Performing Arts Center from 6-7:00 pm. For those in need of support, we encourage you to attend.

REINFORCEMENT

The Hart District has always recognized that the safety and security of our students is a serious and solemn responsibility. To demonstrate this, we invite you to read the *Superintendent's Safety Planning Message* that was posted on the District Website in 2018. This introduction provides an outline of our safety and threat assessment efforts, which includes campus security personnel, lock down protocols, safety plans, emergency drills, text-a-tip hotlines, mental health professionals, threat-assessment teams and special partnerships with law enforcement. Link can be found here:

<https://www.hartdistrict.org/apps/pages/safety-planning>

While this list does not capture the multitude of additional supports we've put in place since the message was posted (such as the installation of "Stop the Bleed" Kits in every classroom throughout the District, the expansion of video surveillance and the installation of "Lock Blocks") it does provide a snapshot of the many ways we employ a network of safety measures to keep kids safe. It's important to recognize that our safety plans implement recommendations from the experts in the field such as the Secret Service, The FBI, the Department of Education, the National Association of School Psychologists and the Department of Justice. We are confident that these plans, along with our preparation, helped to ensure that students and staff responded appropriately (indeed heroically) in the face of extreme danger.

Nevertheless, we recognize the wisdom in continually reinforcing our efforts to ensure that we've done everything reasonably possible to implement best practices in order to keep kids safe. To that end, we've reached out to a panel of experts as we look to build upon our existing plans, policies and procedures. During the Spring Semester 2020, the Hart District will consult with three individuals uniquely qualified to help us understand how best to move forward in the area of school safety and threat assessment.

Mr. Patrick Prince is the Associate Vice Provost and Chief Threat Assessment Officer for the University of Southern California. He is responsible for providing oversight and guidance in the recognition, assessment and management of

potentially dangerous persons who may pose a risk of targeted violence. Mr. Prince has consulted with government agencies and private employers on more than 3,000 cases of threatening situations or acts of violence in the workplace. He is a respected expert who has provided consultation and training to multiple universities and school districts throughout California and across the nation.

Mr. Joseph Wright is the Director of Security for Lincoln Public Schools in Lincoln, NE. Mr. Wright joined LPS in 2013 shortly after the Sandy Hook tragedy with the mandate to create a district-wide threat management program. Prior to his current position, Mr. Wright served the City of Lincoln as a police officer for 27 years and retired at the rank of captain. He speaks nationally on threat management in the K-12 environment and continues to train law enforcement on mental health and threat management issues.

Mr. Ben Kallin is a Threat Assessment Officer at the University of Southern California. He holds graduate degrees in both public administration and social work from the University of Southern California. Mr. Kallin has focused his graduate education on Mental Health and Wellness with an emphasis on the prevention and recognition of homicide and suicide amongst the K-12 and Higher Education populations. He has a variety of experiences in crisis and emergency response, serving on Critical Incident Stress Debriefing teams and trauma response and recovery teams. While in the Marine Corps, he completed two combat deployments to Fallujah, Iraq.

(Full qualifications of the *Safety and Threat Assessment Expert Panel* are included below)

Mr. Prince and his team of experts have been assigned several specific tasks:

- 1) Summarize what research and experts tell us about best practices in the area of school safety and threat assessment.
- 2) Present this information at community meetings where participants will have the opportunity to dialogue about school safety and threat assessment.
- 3) Evaluate the Hart District's existing plans, policies and procedures in light of research on best practices.
- 4) Make recommendations to the Hart District on how to enhance plans, policies and procedures to reflect best practice.

Mr. Prince will introduce himself and share his team's credentials at 7 pm on January 16 in the Saugus Performing Arts Center immediately following Dr. Schonfeld's presentation. At that meeting Mr. Prince will share a brief overview of best practices in the area of threat assessment and school safety and will introduce the dates for community dialogue.

In the wake of the Saugus tragedy, a number of individuals have reached out to us with recommendations for updates to our safety plans. Suggestions have included everything from metal detectors to mental health supports. We thank you for your patience as we have worked to respond thoughtfully and carefully to the crisis with the goal of implementing policies that will ensure the best and most efficient use of resources to keep our students safe. Rather than responding impulsively, we believe it's in our best interest to seek the guidance of those with experience and expertise to help us make careful decisions about school safety and threat assessment. We are confident we have the right experts in place - and thankfully there is direction from respected organizations such as the Secret Service to help guide the way.

In conclusion, I'd like to share an insight gleaned from Dr. Schonfeld's presentation to parents at Saugus High School on November 21. Dr. Schonfeld clarified that *recovery* involves the process of helping traumatized students return to a baseline quality of life. He says that with victims of trauma, many are surprised to experience a season of heightened kindness and empathy while on the road to recovery. They marvel at the special ways people reach out to support one another with genuine love and compassion during their time of need. He said that the communities that recognize this experience – and those that commit to building upon it – are the ones that recover the fastest.

With our eye on recovery, may we be a community henceforth marked by kindness, empathy, compassion and love.

Sincerely
Mike Kuhlman
Deputy Superintendent
William S. Hart Union High School District.

School Crisis and Bereavement Support

DR. DAVID SCHONFELD

Dr. Schonfeld MD, FAAP, is a developmental-behavioral pediatrician and Professor of the Practice in the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and Pediatrics at the University of Southern California and Children's Hospital Los Angeles. He is a member the American Academy of Pediatrics Disaster Preparedness Advisory Council and served as a Commissioner for both the National Commission on Children and Disasters and the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission in Connecticut; he was the President of the Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics (SDBP) from 2006-2007.

Dr. Schonfeld has authored over 100 scholarly articles, book chapters, and books. He has provided consultation and training on school crisis and pediatric bereavement in the aftermath of numerous school crisis events and disasters within the United States and abroad. He has also conducted school-based research (funded by NICHD, NIMH, NIDA, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, William T. Grant Foundation, and other foundations) involving children's understanding of and adjustment to serious illness and death and school-based interventions to promote adjustment and risk prevention.

Safety and Threat Assessment Expert Panel

PATRICK PRINCE

Patrick Prince is the Associate Vice Provost and Chief Threat Assessment Officer for the University of Southern California. He is responsible for providing oversight and guidance in the recognition, assessment and management of potentially dangerous persons who may pose a risk of targeted violence toward members of the USC community. As well, Mr. Prince is an adjunct professor with the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work where he instructs one of the country's only graduate courses in threat assessment for campus violence prevention.

In addition to his role with USC, Mr. Prince has consulted with government agencies and private employers on more than 3,000 cases of threatening situations or acts of violence in the workplace. Mr. Prince is a standing member of corporate threat assessment teams for several Fortune 500 companies as well as numerous cities and government agencies. He served on the joint ASIS-SHRM American National Standards Task Force to develop standards and guidelines for workplace violence prevention/intervention programs which were published in October, 2011.

He has provided consultation and training to a variety of institutions of higher education including the California State University System, University of Nebraska, Pennsylvania State University and California Institute of Technology. He has provided training and consultation to numerous school districts throughout the State of California. Mr. Prince was

invited as a subject matter expert to participate in TARGET- the FBI sponsored West Coast initiative to identify best practices to prevent violence in educational institutions. Mr. Prince WAs an Associate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Public Policy Center which conducts research and provides consultation regarding prevention of targeted violence.

Mr. Prince served on the Board of Directors for the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP) from 2007-2016. He has been a member of the Association for over 26 years. Mr. Prince is one of a select group of threat assessment professionals in the United States to reach recognition as a Certified Threat Manager (CTM).

Mr. Prince received his M.A. in Counseling Psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles. His B.A. in Sociology is from the University of Southern California.

JOSEPH WRIGHT

Joseph Wright is the Director of Security for Lincoln Public Schools in Lincoln, NE. Mr. Wright joined LPS in 2013 shortly after the Sandy Hook tragedy with the mandate to create a district-wide threat management program. Mr. Wright is a member of the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals, ATAP, and has earned the designation of Certified Threat Manager. He is the past president of the five state Great Plains chapter of ATAP and is currently the Chair of ATAP's Education Community. Prior to his current position, Mr. Wright served the City of Lincoln as a police officer for 27 years and retired at the rank of captain. During his tenure with the city, his work focused on behavior health, threat management, juvenile justice and implicit bias in the criminal justice system. Mr. Wright speaks nationally on threat management in the K-12 environment and continues to train law enforcement on mental health and threat management issues.

BEN KALLIN

Mr. Kallin is a Threat Assessment Officer at the University of Southern California. He holds graduate degrees in both public administration and social work from the University of Southern California and is currently a doctoral candidate in the USC Rossiter School of Education. Mr. Kallin has focused his graduate education on Mental Health and Wellness with an emphasis on the prevention and recognition of homicide and suicide amongst the K-12 and Higher Education populations. Mr. Kallin has variety of experience in crisis and emergency response, serving on Critical Incident Stress Debriefing teams and trauma response and recovery teams. While in the Marine Corps, he completed two combat deployments to Fallujah, Iraq. As a Marine with First Reconnaissance Battalion Mr. Kallin provided executive protection and completed traditional reconnaissance combat operations. He is also a former wildland firefighter and wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, having spent 5 years with specialized US Forest Service Hotshot crews fighting fire across the United States.

Ben is a board member of the Los Angeles chapter of the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals and member of The National Association of Social Workers, Iraq Afghanistan Veterans of America and the Military Affairs Committee at the University of Southern California.