

Dear Howell Families,

As we continue to learn of the horrific events that occurred at a Texas elementary school, we are once again devastated and in shock at another school shooting and loss of such young lives. While DPS communications and resources are forthcoming, we wanted to share some important tips for your family in supporting young children and speaking to them before they come to school tomorrow.

- There's no one way to address tragedies with children, and how parents approach it depends both on the child's age and temperament. ***The American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend avoiding the topic with children until they reach a certain age — around 8, but again, it depends on the child.***
- Prevent children from seeing pictures or the news. Images will stick with children longer than words. The ongoing coverage can cause fear and anxiety that children do not have the skills to process.
- Process your own emotional response away from children if possible. What you do and how you react will impact them more than what you say.
- ***Pre-school / Kindergarten*** children should be shielded from the news as much as possible. If you talk with your child about the event, consider a one sentence story.. Keep the story simple. Perhaps you want to let them know that a person with a serious illness felt angry and hurt people. Reassure them that grownups are working to keep them safe.
- ***Early Elementary children*** need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them. Give simple examples of school safety like reminding children about exterior doors being locked, child monitoring efforts on the playground, and emergency drills practiced during the school day.
- ***Upper elementary and early middle school*** children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to provide safe schools.

We will provide this same guidance to our teachers. Teachers will not bring up the topic of the school shooting but will be equipped on how to speak with children following the recommendations above. For any children who demonstrates signs of distress or continues to bring up the event, we will have mental health staff available to support them individually

Here are some additional resources to support speaking to your children:

- [Talking to Kids About Violence](#)
- [Helping Your Children Manage Distress in the Aftermath of a Shooting \(American Psychologists Association\)](#)

- [Coping with Violence](#)

We know incidents like this can bring forth many emotions and questions about safety. At **Farrell B. Howell** your child's safety is our top priority. We recognize that you place an enormous amount of trust in us each day you send your child to school. We will continue to prioritize your child's safety at all times. We currently have the following protocols/ safety features in place each day:

- Exterior doors are locked at all times. Anyone entering the building must buzz in at the main entrance. The office staff checks the camera before buzzing anyone in.
- All visitors enter through the main doors and report to the office. The vestibule doors are always locked during the school day.
- All visitors check in with office staff and are issued a visitor badge or enter their driver's license into the Raptor system which prints a picture ID to be worn at all times.
- Volunteers are pre scheduled and check in at the office when they arrive and when they leave.
- All volunteers have passed a background check.
- Adults outside have a walkie talkie or cell phone to communicate with the main office and school leaders.
- In case of an unlikely emergency, the office has a distress button that connects directly to the Denver Police Department. If it is pushed, DPD immediately sends a response team to the school.

We'll be prepared to support all children and adults tomorrow morning. In the aftermath of yet another school shooting, let's continue to lift our voices to support solutions that will keep our kids safe and our classrooms places of learning and joy they are meant to be.

Sincerely,

**Rachel Massey**

Principal