

Dear Families,

This message aims to clarify the threat assessment and student dismissal processes that NPS and NPD conducted, correct misinformation and misunderstandings during the investigation, and provide a level of reassurance and commitment to ongoing self-evaluation. I want to thank those who have reached out with concerns and shared questions about our safety procedures. Your feedback is valuable, and we will consider it as we continually monitor and revise our safety protocols.

### **Notifications and decision to unload buses at CMS.**

We understand this situation caused significant worry, and our priority is the safety and well-being of our students. This situation unfolded quickly, involving student messages, immediate police involvement, and the need for swift action. We recognize the gap between what officials initially knew and the information families received through circulating messages. This could have understandably caused anxiety. The rapid spread of unverified information presented a challenge. We assure you that the police swiftly launched a thorough investigation and supported the middle school. Early findings indicated the messages referenced a future event and did not originate locally. Based on this information, we proceeded with the school day while the investigation continued. To be clear, if we were in a position where this threat was rising to a level that presented an immediate threat, we would have implemented our evacuation protocols. We understand the importance of clear and timely communication. We are committed to reviewing this situation and implementing measures to improve communication during such events, ensuring families receive information as quickly and accurately as possible.

Our top priority throughout this process was ensuring the safety of our students. The police conducted a comprehensive threat assessment, considering various factors. Threat assessments are a process that considers the nature of the threat, whether it is direct, indirect, veiled, or conditional, and whether the person making the threat has the time, opportunity, ability, desire/motivation, and stimulus (TOADS) to carry out such a threat. By 8:40, we were working on a message that the threat was found to be “not credible.” Not Credible means there

is a level of believability or trust in the assumption of the threat being unactionable; reaching this level takes additional time, and due to the ongoing nature of the investigation, we needed to be careful in our messaging. In a short time, this outcome represents incredible work and cooperation by NPD and our Coakley staff.

While timely communication is crucial, we also needed to ensure our messaging wouldn't jeopardize the ongoing investigation. This meant taking the necessary time to gather accurate information before issuing official statements. A successful investigation goes beyond potential legal consequences. We aim to understand the situation fully, answer questions, and ensure a safe environment for students and parents. This requires a thorough investigation that may take time. We define a successful investigation as being able to "get to the bottom of it " and get questions answered so kids and parents would feel comfortable at school again. Fundamental questions like whether we are sure we have the right person, how we know, and whether there are firearms in the home need to be determined. We don't have the opportunity to get "credible " answers if the investigation is compromised. Unfortunately, we were walking a fine line between communication and ensuring a successful investigation.

Please know that we are committed to finding the right balance between ongoing investigations and timely communication. We are actively reviewing this situation to implement improvements for the future.

### **The School was not in Lockdown at any time.**

Friday's incident caused great concern, and we understand that many parents wanted to be reunited with their children. Based on our ongoing investigation, a full lockdown or Shelter-in-place wasn't necessary, but the school day did require adjustments.

Following established safety protocols, the school day continued with the following modifications:

- Flexible dismissal: Homeroom was extended to accommodate families picking up their children early.
- Addressing student needs: Teachers actively listened to student concerns and reassured them of their safety. Activities and games were provided to promote a sense of calm.

- Continued communication and support: By 10:30 am, the dismissal situation stabilized. Dr. Fraczek and Lieutenant Flanigan met with the remaining students to address questions and provide further reassurance.
- Maintaining normalcy: The school day continued with a modified schedule, offering choices for the remaining students.
- Additional support: We understand the lingering anxieties and offer additional support at dismissal.

### **Parent Dismissal**

As the school was not in lockdown, nor was the investigation, at this point, focused inside CMS, the intent was to have a normal dismissal process if parents felt they needed to dismiss their children. What was not anticipated was the sudden arrival of hundreds of parents. The Lobby at CMS is small, as is the main office. It is important to note that the lobby was staffed by CMS teachers and counselors working to unite parents with their children. Furthermore, there were three police officers (2 plain clothed) in the lobby at the top of the ramp and stairs. In total, there were 8 to 10 officers at the school to ensure safety early on and then to provide support. The Norwood Public Schools does have a detailed reunification process designed to be implemented after an evacuation and relocation. A version of this process was put into place, but due to the overwhelming number of people, this took time.

### **Reflection and Moving Forward**

We primarily focused on Monday's reentry procedures this weekend and yesterday. It is the practice of the Norwood Schools to review our response and adjust our situational awareness. This process has already begun at the building level and will be reviewed district-wide. These results and adjustments will be shared with the school committee. These events had aspects we could not have anticipated and areas where we need to improve our protocols and procedures. That work has already begun and will continue. As every emergency or crisis situation is a little different, this process ensures we continue to assess and make adjustments. Providing a safe and caring environment for your children is our most important job, and we take that very seriously.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomson