



DANSVILLE, NY

May 25, 2022

Dear Parents and Employees,

It is hard to believe that we are emerging from a pandemic only to find ourselves back in a vicious cycle of mass casualty shootings. Like you, I am sad, frustrated and angry over the shooting at a Buffalo Tops supermarket that was fueled by racism and hatred. And like you, I am sickened over the Texas elementary school shooting Tuesday morning.

The unfortunate truth is that there are human beings who are so disturbed that they commit mass murder. There are others who hold beliefs and commit heinous acts in a cold and calculated manner based upon an evil ideology.

We are, however, empowered to prevent hate, ignorance and violence. We have the tools we need to teach and reinforce love and respect. We can help our children to distinguish between good and bad, productive and counterproductive, helpful and hurtful on every level regardless of age. Teaching right from wrong is perhaps our greatest responsibility as parents and educators.

At Dansville Schools we listen to our students and one another. We show empathy while holding kids accountable. We build and sustain relationships with students uncommonly well here in Dansville.

When we learn of a concerning comment, a possible threat or an insensitive social media post we begin an investigation and conduct a formal threat assessment. We oftentimes ask for help from Livingston County mental health or law enforcement. We always look into the concern and students, parents and others can always [drop an anonymous tip through our website or by clicking the tip-line here.](#)

We have strong security systems in place, our hardened doors are locked throughout the day and we follow strict entry protocols. We train students and staff to protect themselves and one another. We have very strong relationships with DPD, LCSD and the NYS Police all of whom have 24/7 access to our facilities.

DR. PAUL J. ALIOTO
Superintendent
THOMAS D. FRAZIER
Executive Director for Administration & HR

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I understand that parents may feel a sense of unease but there are some things you can do to take control and protect your children emotionally. Shelter them from news coverage. Monitor their social media use. Avoid accidental exposure to traumatic events in the world. However, when children and young people are already aware of a tragedy, reassure, validate, empathize, listen, monitor their behavior and emotions and follow your routine. There are very helpful recommendations and links at the end of this letter.

In the wake of mass casualty incidents, take heart. We are not helpless. We have the tools and compassion we need to protect our children and we will steadfastly continue to do so. Our children are precious and we are all in this together. Please call me, your child's school principal or classroom teacher, counselor or Deputy Holt with any questions and recommendations on improving school safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul J. Alioto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Paul J. Alioto
Superintendent

How to Talk to Your Kids about School Violence - VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WiHgEdoMJY&t=49s>

Talking To Kids About Fear And Violence

<https://www.mhanational.org/talking-kids-about-fear-and-violence>

Sesame Street - Helping Children Cope with Violence - VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXtFhqlhWwo&t=138s>

Talking to Children about Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers>

8 Ways to Guide Your Conversation

1. First and foremost—reassure the child that they are safe. Schools are overwhelmingly safe overall despite the high-profile acts that occur every year. They can rest easy knowing themselves and their loved ones will be okay.

2. Let them know you understand what they're feeling. Validate those feelings and let them know that all feelings are okay when a tragedy occurs. Let them talk through their issues and put it into perspective. Simply expressing their (potentially bottled up) emotions can be therapeutic.

3. Listen. Truly give the child your ear—listen to their questions. Devote the time to understand and hear them out. Let their questions guide the details of the conversation

4. Understand your audience. Make sure your explanation of the events is appropriate to the child's age and development level.

- Early elementary school children need brief, simple information along with assurances of safety at home and at school. They need to understand that older adult figures are there to protect them. Citing examples of safety (such as locked building doors, security efforts, etc.) helps even more.
- Upper elementary and middle school children can use the same assurances but will be old enough to want to know greater detail about the measures. Just how much goes into the security checks? How are visitors checked before entering a building? They may also be able to discuss the direct causes (i.e. how did an offender get their hands on a weapon?), and how they are being prevented.
- Older middle school and high school students will need the same level of detail, but may also be ready for deeper discussions on not just the direct causes, but the root causes of violence. They will be ready to discuss the macro causes and even share suggestions for how to make schools and society safer.

5. Let them understand how they can help. Emphasize that even they can make a difference, by helping to maintain safety in schools. This may include following safety guidelines, like not giving building access to strangers, or reporting suspicious activity. Review safety procedures and remind the child exactly how the procedures and safeguards work at school.

6. Pay heed to their emotional state. Observe children's emotional state. Some children may not express their concerns verbally. Changes in behavior, appetite, and sleep patterns can indicate a child's level of anxiety or discomfort. In most children, these symptoms will ease with reassurance and time. However, some children may be at risk for more intense reactions. Children who have had past traumatic experience or personal loss, suffer from depression or other mental illness, or with special needs may be at greater risk for severe reactions than others. Seek the help of a mental health professional if you are at all concerned.

7. Maintain a normal routine. Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring and promote physical health. Ensure that children get plenty of sleep, regular meals, and exercise. Encourage them to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities but don't push them if they seem overwhelmed.

This video offers another take on discussing school violence with your children.

Suggested Points to Emphasize When Talking to Children*

- Schools are safe places. School staff work with parents and public safety providers (local police and fire departments, emergency responders, hospitals, etc.) to keep you safe.
- The school building is safe because children and teachers are trained in emergency procedures, we have a school resource officer, we have caring adults who protect children, etc.

- We all play a role in school safety. Be observant and let an adult know if you see or hear something that makes you feel uncomfortable, nervous, or frightened.
 - There is a difference between reporting, tattling, or gossiping. You can provide important information that may prevent harm either directly or anonymously by telling a trusted adult what you know or hear.
 - Don't dwell on the worst possibilities. Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen, it is important to understand the difference between the possibility of something happening and the probability that it will affect our school.
 - Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand. Doing things that you enjoy, sticking to your normal routine, and being with friends and family help make us feel better and keep us from worrying about the event.
 - Sometimes people do bad things that hurt others. They may be unable to handle their anger, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or suffering from mental illness. Adults (parents, teachers, police officers, doctors, faith leaders) work very hard to get those people to help and keep them from hurting others. It is important for all of us to know how to get help if we feel really upset or angry and to stay away from drugs and alcohol.
 - Stay away from guns and other weapons (unless a parent is with you and teaching you about hunting and safe firearm handling). Tell an adult if you know someone has a gun at school. Access to guns is one of the leading risk factors for deadly violence.
 - Violence is never a solution to personal problems. Students can be part of the positive solution by participating in anti-violence programs at school, learning conflict mediation skills, and seeking help from an adult if they or a peer is struggling with anger, depression, or other emotions they cannot control.
- (Adapted from the Public School Review, 2020)