

Morley Stanwood Community Schools



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Dear Mohawk Family,

This particular letter addresses some of the concerns we face as a community and a school, and truthfully as a culture and a nation as a whole. It addresses both concerns about mental health as well as school violence. I believe it is important that I state right from the start that this DOES NOT involve a Morley Stanwood student.

My intention behind this letter is to be informational. What I do not want is to start rumors or stoke unrealized concerns or fears. At the same time, please don't think your concerns as parents aren't valid, because they are. I simply want to let you know what we do here at MSCS when concerns are brought to our attention and to the best of my ability keep you informed.

There are times when we hear something directly regarding a student concern or a threat to the school. On the other hand, there are also times when we are contacted by the police because they have information and need our help. I am happy to say we have a very good working relationship with the police. As you know when a student gets in trouble at school, we are prevented by law (FERPA) from saying what consequence the student received. Likewise, when the police ask for our help, we are limited as to what can be said.

Recently we were contacted by both CPS and the police regarding a situation. We worked together to help resolve the concern. In the most recent situation information was passed on to me that a caller had expressed both the ideation of self-harm as well as harm to others. The difficulty authorities were having was determining if this was a legitimate call, who they were, and where they were located.

In the end, the police were able to come up with a location and contact the individual. That is where my knowledge of the situation ends. Again, I can tell you that this did not involve one of our students. As a matter of fact, it did not actually involve an address within our district boundaries. I share this because I want factual information to be out, not rumor and mistruths.

My point to the letter is twofold. There may be people of all ages in our lives that are struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts that need help. There are resources available. But, know that very often folks won't ask the people closest to them for that help. Unfortunately, and I will add unnecessarily, mental health has a stigma attached to it. I do believe it's better than in times past, but it still exists. If you break your arm or your leg, do you not go to the doctor? If you have asthma or pneumonia, don't you get treatment for it? We need to take the same approach to mental illness.

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The second point of this letter is to be very open and transparent with all of you. Yes, these situations are often frightening. Maybe these events happen more often than they used to. I need you to know Morley Stanwood Schools takes them all very serious and deals with each and everyone one of them. The difficulty is we cannot give details or explain what happened. I think the perception often becomes, "they didn't do anything."

We continue to tell our students if you hear something or see something, say something. I think I'd like to clarify that just a bit. Don't just tell anyone. Tell an adult and do it right away. And parents, if you are that adult, please contact the school. I understand the idea of sending your child back to school with directions of "go to the office when you get there and tell the principal." Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen in a timely manner.

The other thing I'd like to encourage parents is to talk to their children about the unintended consequences of spreading this type of information. Thankfully nine plus times out of ten it ends up being false. We all know rumors simply stoke unnecessary fears. As I said a few sentences back, tell your children, if they hear something to go tell an adult.

As always, thank you for you unwavering support of Morley Stanwood Community Schools. Truly, that along with a staff who are dedicated to seeing the best in young people, makes MSCS an amazing place.

