



VERONA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Superintendent Corner Column Response to Parkland Shooting February 2018

*"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me,
"Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." Mister Rogers*

It saddens me to write to you in the days following the senseless act that occurred in Parkland, Florida. A tragedy that takes innocent lives from their loving families in a place that is supposed to be a safe haven can have an emotional effect on so many people, and it is natural for children and their parents to be concerned for their own safety.

The Verona Public Schools are the foundation of a strong and vibrant community where dedicated teachers, counselors, staff, and administrators remain committed to the safety and well being of all students. Our school district works closely with the Verona Police Department to regularly practice emergency action plans should such a response ever be necessary and over the past several years we have secured our schools with the addition of main entrance security vestibules, a visitor management system, surveillance camera system, and staff entry key fobs. But safety and security within our community is a shared responsibility. We must remain vigilant and keep open lines of positive, constructive communication between home, school, and law enforcement. When you see something or hear something, say something.

To foster this communication, our district has established Action Committees on Mental Health & Suicide Prevention designed to engage community input and make recommendations to the Verona Board of Education on how to strengthen our comprehensive support system of

educational resources and preventive strategies. Should you need assistance for your child, please click [here](#) to learn more about the mental health programs, crisis intervention, and support services provided by our school district and contact your school principal. The Verona Public Schools has mental health professionals on hand who can provide guidance and support to families.

At home, we must take great caution in how we engage with our children about such tragic events. The American Psychological Association recommends limiting news coverage, having an age-appropriate dialogue about the events that occurred in Parkland, Florida, acknowledging their feelings, and reassuring them that the adults in their lives are always working to keep them safe. For more information on how to speak with your child, visit resources at the [American Psychological Association Help Center](#).

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the entire Parkland community, especially to the victims and their families. During such challenging times, we must continue to come together to support those in need. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

All my best,

Dr. Rui Dionisio
Superintendent of Schools