



## *Polson School District #23*

Dear Staff, Students, Families, and our Polson Community:

As a father, community member, and a life-long educator, I too have been impacted by the recent horrific school shooting, yet again, this time in Florida. It breaks my heart, saddens me, and angers me to the core that kids are the target of such barbaric actions. My prayers go out to the victims, their families, and to the survivors.

As a school community, our mission is to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for all students and staff. We take this very seriously. Although we may not be able to predict what specific violent acts of hatred will happen in today's society, we are taking action in preparing staff trainings in Run, Lock, Fight for active shooter events in all of our schools in the coming months.

Here in the Polson Schools, we are initiating conversations centered around serving the whole child vs. only addressing children's academic needs. We are serious about developing the social-emotional aspect of a child. Mental health awareness is paramount in working with our youth today. We will continue to strengthen our systems that will address the physical, academic, and social-emotional needs of all children.

All schools in our district hold required lockdown, fire, bomb, and earthquake drills throughout the year. These required drills help us prepare in the event we have an actual emergency. Polson School District and the Polson City Police Department have increased communication in regards to student safety. In addition, the Polson School District has one School Resource Officer who assists students and staff in each of our buildings.

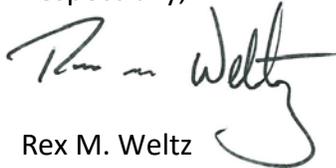
Extra security measures will be added to both Linderman Elementary and Cherry Valley Elementary in the coming weeks. We will be adding "lock-down" buttons to these schools that will allow us to secure the building and alert police dispatch that an emergency situation is occurring with one push of a button. Currently the High School and Middle School both are equipped with this feature.

As a colleague recently stated to his district in a very relevant manner. "We can train to think and react if various situations present themselves. We can encourage our students to understand that if they see something they must say something. Together, we can become more astute observers and we can become increasingly proactive in our thinking about the safety of students, staff and our community."

I encourage all of you to reach out to your children, family, neighbors and members of the community who may need support or affirmation. I do believe that we have the collective capacity to be the difference in our community."

We can't do this alone. We need your help. Everyone in our community plays a critical role in school safety and in the safety of our community. We will emphasize to our students that if they have concerns or fears, they should seek out an adult. Communication is critical and if you know or hear of any threat to our students, staff, or schools, please contact our local law enforcement immediately.

Respectfully,



Rex M. Wertz  
Superintendent Polson School District #23

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Talking To Children About Tragedies and Other News Events**

Healthy Children.org

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Talking-To-Children-About-Tragedies-and-Other-News-Events.aspx>

#### **Talking to Kids**

[Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers \(PDF\)](#)

#### **National Association of School Psychologists**

"Talking to Children about Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers"

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

Disaster Distress Hotline - a 24 hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week resource that responds to people who need crisis counseling after experiencing a tragedy. The Helpline will provide confidential counseling, referrals and other needed support services. Call [1-800-985-5990](tel:1-800-985-5990) or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.