

May 27, 2022

Hi Everyone,

As I sit here looking over the senior quotes for our upcoming graduation ceremony, I cannot help but think about those 19 children in Texas who will never have the opportunity to walk across the stage and receive their diploma. They will never have the opportunity to attend a homecoming dance, go to Prom, fill out a college application, attend a Mother Daughter Tea, and so many other special events that take place while attending school.

Also, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the 2 teachers who were heroes in this tragedy. Both were mothers who will never hug their children again. They will never witness the milestone events that most parents will get to see. They died trying to protect their students.

The staff at Yoncalla School District, want to send our thoughts and deepest sympathy to the entire Uvalde, Texas community as we reflect on the unthinkable horror of what happened at Robb Elementary School. We would also like to take this opportunity to remind all of our families that we have a plan in place at each of our schools to handle emergency situations. We work with the Douglas County Sheriff and North Douglas Fire and EMS to prepare for these types of emergencies and regularly practice our safety protocols with students and staff through discussions and emergency drills. While no amount of planning can guarantee that a tragedy such as this will not occur, we are doing everything we know to keep students and staff safe while at school.

This is a time of intense sorrow and anxiety for all school communities, and we felt it was important to share with you some information about possible resources for families. The American School Counselor Association offers the following guidelines for helping students after a school shooting:

- Try to keep routines as normal as possible. Kids gain security from the predictability of routine, including attending school.
- Limit exposure to television and the news.^[1]_{SEP}
- Be honest with kids and share with them as much information as they are developmentally able to handle.
- Listen to kids' fears and concerns.
- Reassure kids that the world is a good place to be, but that there are people who do bad things.
- Parents and adults need to first deal with and assess their own responses to crisis and stress.
- Rebuild and reaffirm attachments and relationships.

In addition, here is a resource from the National Association of School Psychologists that you may find helpful in talking about these tragedies at home: [Talking about Violence](#).

In closing, I am sure that you, like me, are stunned and trying to make sense of this horrific tragedy. We continue to search for the words to help our children feel safe and strong in

a world that feels unpredictable and at times terrifying. My advice is to hug your children and tell them you love them. Also, let's come together and find a way to get along. We all have our differences, and this event will be politicized just like the pandemic has been. You may not agree with the course of action, but I think we can all agree that safety is paramount in education. Students will not learn in an environment that does not feel safe. It is our job as adults to create a safe haven for our children. Let's do it and stop talking about it!!! 😊

Respectfully,

Brian Berry, Superintendent

Yoncalla School District