



"Together We Learn"

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 23

(CENTRAL OKANAGAN)

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December 14, 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Central Okanagan School District is deeply saddened by the school shooting that took place in Connecticut on Friday, December 14, 2012. As the shock subsides, thoughts turn to our own schools and our own students. It is understandable that there will be some anxiety throughout the School District about this incident.

While the potential for such an incident taking place in the Central Okanagan appears to be very low, school staff will be reviewing school safety procedures and ensuring that they are all up-to-date.

This tragedy is receiving significant media attention and your child may be impacted by it. Staff members have been asked to watch for student reaction and to offer support if needed. The following are some strategies parents may wish to consider in supporting children through this time of grief:

- **Be yourself** – Demonstrate your natural concern calmly and in your own words.
- **Be available** – Spend time with your child. Attempt to distract your child by reading, walking, going to a movie, etc.
- **Listen** – Let your child express his/her thoughts, concerns, feelings, and perceptions in a nonjudgmental, emotionally safe environment.
- **Explain** – Talk about what you know in short, truthful statements. Don't be afraid to admit that you do not have all the answers.
- **Do not speculate.**
- **Develop resiliency** – Your child will look to you for reassurance. Do not convey your own feelings of hopelessness, but rather let your child know that they will get through this difficult period.
- **Provide comfort** – Physical and verbal comforts are great healers.
- **Attend to physical manifestations of trauma** - Children will often complain of headaches, stomach aches, backaches, etc. Monitor physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, anxiety, sleep disturbance, etc. and determine whether medical intervention is required.
- **Maintain regular routines** – As much as possible, attempt to provide normalcy to your child. Humans are creatures of habit and derive comfort from regular routines.
- **Monitor media exposure** – Do not overexpose your child to media reports (especially preschool and elementary age children).
- **Seek additional support** – When appropriate, your child should be directed to community support agencies.

Please contact your child's school if you think extra help is needed, or if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Hugh Gloster
Superintendent of Schools