

Backpack Mail

April 25, 2011



From the Principal...

This was going to be a busy week but the unfortunate events of Tuesday overshadowed all planned events for this week.

Many parents called asking for information after they received the letter informing them that a gun had been on campus and, of course, the news reported this event with all kinds of incorrect information. I want to share with you the actual information.

*Several students reported there was a student with a gun on campus. I was at a district meeting and the Assistant Principal called APS Police to report the incident. Madison does not have an APS officer or an APD officer on campus. I want you to understand that once APS Police or APD is contacted they manage the situation and tell the school what to do.

*The police arrived and immediately removed the young man reported to have the gun. Police did not find a gun but they did find bullets. They questioned this young man in the Assistant Principal's office.

*I arrived on campus and a few students came into my office to report that the student with the gun may have passed it off to his friend and if the friend did not have it, it may have been put into his locker. I told the police this information and we went to pick up the young man who may have been holding the gun.

*The young man suspected of holding the gun admitted immediately that he had the other young man's gun in his backpack. The police immediately took the backpack, moved the young man to an area out of eyesight of our students and checked him to see if he had any items on his person. He did not have anything of concern on him and he was taken into my office. At this point APS Police did not feel they needed to lock down Madison. (The police make the decisions regarding lock downs at schools.)

*I spoke with the Public Information Office to discuss my plan on informing the community. I planned to send a voicemail. They asked me to hold off on sending a ParentLink message to inform parents of the situation. They sent me the copy of a letter to send to the community. I received a follow up call saying the Associate Superintendent wanted me to send a letter only.

*APS police continued their questioning and contacted APD. The parents of both students were called. The students were transported from Madison to City Center where they waited for information on the ownership of the gun. Both boys were taken to the Juvenile Detention Center.

*We copied the letter to the community and distributed it to 6th period classes for students to take home to their parents. I left a message for the Associate Superintendent.

*I sent an email to the Madison staff.

*I made an announcement to the students explaining the situation and thanking them for standing up to do the right thing by reporting that they saw a gun on campus.

*We called the APS Hearing Office and scheduled hearings for both boys requesting expulsion as outlined in the Student Behavior Handbook, page 11. Both boys are suspended from Madison pending the outcome of the hearing. The district has 10 days to hold the hearing.

*I spoke with the Associate Superintendent, Eddie Soto, to share the information regarding the situation at Madison.

*Our counselor made arrangements for the Crisis Team to come and work with students who were worried and had concerns on Wednesday.

*I requested police presence at lunches and after school.

*We reminded students on Wednesday not to spread rumors and gossip but if they actually saw something with their own eyes or heard something with their own ears that they should report this information to the office. Students who came into the office wrote statements and we followed up on all reports. The two biggest rumors were that there was another student on campus with a gun, but no one knew his name, and that there was a hit list. There was no other gun and there was no hit list.

* We began creating the chain of positive acts of kindness to wrap the inside of the school with hope and optimism.

*I met with two APD officers assigned to schools and let them know what kind of assistance they could provide. It was especially important to talk with the officer from Sandia High School since the student who brought the gun to school said he was being bullied by older guys. The identified "bully" is a student at Sandia.

*Thursday I met with 6th grade students to review the facts and answer any questions they had prior to lunch.

*Friday seemed to be a calm day and we had a Spring Fling during the lunches. During difficult times it is always reassuring to know that the adults involved are calm and confident that the situation will be resolved. Thank you to the parents who sought information, the staff who worked so hard to maintain a sense of normalcy and listen to students, the district Crisis Team, APS Police, and APD. Together we can continue to make great things happen for the students at Madison.

Enjoy the MAGIC!
Marcie Johnson
Principal

