

March 19, 2003

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Due to the escalating crisis with Iraq, it would be understandable for parents to have concerns regarding the safety of their children at school. Please know that District 7 has a Safety Plan in place and we will remain vigilant and make needed revisions as events dictate.

Although we will strive to provide the safest environment possible; there needs to be a cooperative effort between the schools and the home. Please keep in mind that we, as adults, need to remain calm and not succumb to panic. A sense of security for the children's sake needs to take priority over our own personal fears. The students deserve no less from all of us.

With the afore-mentioned in mind, we will proceed as follows:

- Should a homeland crisis occur during school hours, staff will be informed, but discussion will not occur with students. Parents should choose how, and what, they will share with their own children.
- It would be advisable to maintain "business as usual." For this reason, we would not recommend that parents remove students during the school day. However, the ultimate decision rests with the parents. Should a parent decide to remove a student from school, the student must be signed out by a parent in the office. Our recommendation is to allow students to remain in school and continue with their education.
- In the event that we need to contact families, we will use the phone fan-outs that were established in the fall. It is imperative that we have current phone numbers on file.
- When visiting school buildings, please report to the office.
- At home, children's questions should be answered factually (as opposed to emotionally).

Although the nation is presently on Code Orange Alert, we are not aware that Dearborn Heights nor the larger Detroit community is a targeted area. For the time being, let us all try to work together for the well-being of our children.

Sincerely,

Susan Backman
Superintendent of Schools

(Mandy: This document was sent to staff only)

Iraq Conflict Procedures
March 19, 2003

Please remember that countless gray areas exist in this current conflict. Even experts on the Middle East voice opposing viewpoints on many issues related to this situation, which is multifaceted and extremely complicated. The best solution is to direct student questions to their parents. The following guidelines should be practiced:

- Students need to be reassured that they are safe in school. Conduct business as usual to the fullest extent. Many children reflect their emotional environment. Therefore, it is important that as adults in charge, we remain calm and supportive.
- Direct students to the office or the counselor if you feel there is a need.
- Revisit democratic values as appropriate (diversity, patriotism, etc).
- Promote a sense of belonging and unity.
- Encourage parents to talk with their children.
- Stress the idea of everyone getting along at school by reviewing basic life skills.
- Emphasize connections across cultures and humanitarianism.
- Some families may have relatives in the Armed Forces. It is appropriate to express our gratitude.
- Some families may have relatives living in the area of conflict. We need to respect their concern.
- Avoid editorializing on “who is right.”
- News coverage can be graphic and could easily upset students. Help students understand how some reports are sensationalized.
- Be careful not to stereotype any cultures or equate terrorism with ethnic groups.
- Grades K – 8: Televisions and radios are not to be turned on for any coverage or discussion of the conflict.
- Grades 9 – 12: Use discretion based upon the age of the students and the subject area being taught. Avoid lengthy discussions and direct students to the task at hand.