

Superintendent Update from Dr. Wagner Marseille | May 27, 2022

Dear Staff and Families,

As we close out this week, we continue to process the tragic loss of innocent lives of children and staff at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. My heart goes out to those who are grieving and impacted by this devastating incident. Coming to an agreement on how to best protect the lives of young children from gun violence should not be subject to political debate or become slogans for political campaigns. We all want our children to be safe, and there is an expectation that when they arrive at the schoolhouse door they will return safely to their homes. The level of gun violence in the United States continues to outpace any other industrialized country in the world. If we can come together to share our condolences, then we can also come together to solve these systemic challenges.

I would like to express my gratitude to our school counselors and staff for their resiliency as they continue to support one another and our students during these horrific times. I am thankful for the brave and safe spaces they have created for students, staff, and families.

No one can ever be prepared to face tragic events such as what occurred in Uvalde, Texas. However, the district is committed to the safety and well-being of our students and staff. Earlier this calendar year, at our November 8 board meeting, we approved a contract with Cardinal Point Security Group to assist the district in reviewing and evaluating its all-hazards plan.

At our February 28 board meeting, Cardinal Point Security, provided a high-level review of their findings and recommendations moving forward. In their presentation, Cardinal Points highlighted strengths, areas of improvement, and next steps. Since then, the district, in addition to building-level Emergency Teams, has been working to effectively implement these recommendations. We are very fortunate for the support of Chief Splain and Chief Stufflet and their participation and leadership during Emergency Team meetings. Together, we are working to strengthen the safety measures in our school district. I have consistently advocated for stronger supervision of students, and, in the 2022-2023 Proposed Final Budget, I have earmarked funds that will allow for additional staffing to supervise our campuses and hallways.

At the monthly School Board meeting on Monday, May 23, the 2022-2023 Proposed Final Budget was presented by Mary Martin, our Business Manager. Much of the presentation centered around a recommended debt restructure that addresses the district's ongoing structural deficit. The need for this restructure was explained and illustrated with an exhibit showing that the high levels of debt service will become sharply reduced around 2028-2029. The proposed restructuring would level out the payments providing near term relief. Of the \$50 million existing debt, approximately \$14 million would be restructured. Additionally, an overview of the proposed final budget was presented, showing a 2.4% tax increase, which is lower than the Act 1 index of 3.4%. The final budget will be presented at the regularly scheduled school board meeting on June 27, 2022.

The two additional focus topics at the board meeting were a presentation by Dr. Savage that showcased the highlights of Wallingford Elementary School, and a recognition of the twenty-three retirees, who, combined, have provided 473 years of service to the students and families of WSSD. We wish them all the best in their retirement.

At the Policy Committee meeting on Wednesday, May 24, the committee considered a number of policies specific to the Office of Student Services including a second reading of Policy 218 pertaining to student discipline. The following policies were considered for a first reading: 247 (Hazing), 248 (Unlawful Harassment), 249 (Bullying), 218.1 (Prohibition of Weapons), 218.2 (Terroristic Threats Acts), 226 (New; Student Searches), and 237 (New; Electronic Devices).

Last night, I attended the Academic Awards Ceremony at Strath Haven High School where seniors were acknowledged for their leadership, academic excellence and growth, community service, and contribution to the school community. Students were also recognized for their Advanced Placement and National Merit honors, and a number of community awards and scholarships were also announced. Congratulations to all of the recipients.

As we enjoy time with family this Memorial Day weekend, let's not forget to reflect and honor those who have served and lost their lives for our country.

Please mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

- May 30 Memorial Day (District closed)

- June 1 WSSD Jazz Night at Media's "Dining Under the Stars" @ 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
- June 14 Educational Affairs Committee Meeting @ SHMS Room B226 @ 7 p.m.

Stay safe,

Wagner Marseille, Ed.D.