



December 17, 2012

Dear Parents and Families,

In response to the recent tragic events in our nation, we would like parents to know that our building crisis teams met with faculty and staff this morning to plan for the safety and emotional security of our students. We anticipated that our students would have had varied levels of awareness regarding the recent tragedy, depending on their developmental needs. In order to support conversations at home, GCSD teachers and staff will monitor the needs of their students throughout the week, and offer support to individual students as needed. Conversations will focus on safety, and not the details of the events. Our purpose is to reassure students that they are safe at school and that there are adults around them at all times to ensure their protection. In order to be respectful of all our students' needs, especially our youngest students, we ask that parents remind children to avoid this topic on the bus, in the cafeteria, and at recess.

In addition, throughout the week, our counselors, school psychologists and school nurses will be providing students with counseling and support. The following are some ideas that you may find helpful in assisting your children to cope with these traumatic events. These suggestions were adapted from information provided to schools by the New York State Office of Mental Health, [Grief Counseling Resource Guide](#).

How Parents Can Help Their Children

- Hug your child often.
- Reassure the child frequently that you are safe and together.
- Talk with your child about his/her feelings. Share your feelings too. Give information the child can understand.
- Talk about what happened. Present a realistic picture that is both honest and is manageable for the child.
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime.
- Spend extra time together in family activities to begin replacing fears with pleasant memories.
- Try not to interrupt daily routines.
- Provide a positive model. Children will look to you and other adults for clues as to how to react.
- Children's fears may stem from their imagination. Take these feelings seriously. Your words and actions can provide reassurance.

- Ask the child what is uppermost in his/her mind, take time to listen and provide reassurance. Be aware that after a disaster, children are most afraid that:
 - The event will happen again
 - Someone they know will be injured or killed
 - They will be separated from their family
 - They will be left alone

The entire Grief Counseling Crisis Guide can be accessed at: <http://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/grief/>

Additional resources are available via the National Association of School Psychologists' website. We've attached a helpful link for your convenience: http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/talkingviolence.pdf Paper copies of this resource are available at each school office.

Again, our teachers and staff will continue to be available for students. Please feel free to contact us for further information or if your child needs additional support.

Sincerely,



Peter Mahan
Elementary Principal



Brian Reeve
Middle School Principal



Michael Laster
High School Principal