



September 15, 2024

Dear Sarah Smith Community,

I'm reaching out to follow up on an incident involving a staff member who was discovered in possession of a firearm on campus last week. I understand and empathize with why this has raised concerns in our community. I want to personally identify our actions to ensure your student's ongoing safety and well-being.

As a father and educator, I understand the angst and range of emotions that last week's events may have caused. I have spoken with many parents, and the common theme is to ensure that our children are safe. We all share the same sentiments. My youngest child attends an Atlanta Public School, and his safety - and that of your student - is my primary concern. Our security and well-being are the top priority for the admin team, staff, families, students, and the community.

Upon learning of the possible presence of a firearm on campus, we immediately recovered the firearm in line with district policy and state law, without incident. Moving forward, APSPD will provide additional patrols; an SRO has been assigned in the interim, and plans for long-term elementary coverage are being discussed. We are also receiving support from the Atlanta Police Department to bolster security around our schools.

I have personally reached out to every family directly impacted and assured them of the availability of counseling services for their student. This support is not limited to those directly impacted; it is available to all students needing it. We have additional counselors on standby to provide the necessary support. If your child needs to speak to someone, please do not hesitate to contact us.

What to expect in the coming days:

1. **Enhanced Security Measures:** Maintaining an increased police presence on campus.
2. **Safety Protocol Evaluation:** Comprehensive review of our safety procedures in partnership with the district and law enforcement.
3. **Student Support:** Counseling services will remain available for all students. We will also closely monitor the impacted classrooms, and staff will receive guidance on best supporting students during this time.
4. **Consistent Updates:** Provide regular updates of any developments that I am at liberty to share. Transparency is essential, and I want to keep you informed.
5. **Safety Town Hall:** We will host a safety town hall meeting. The date will be forthcoming.

As a reminder, APS has proactively supported Sarah Smith with the following safety updates:

1. Security vestibules with ballistic film
2. CENTEGIX Badges
3. Updated safety protocols
4. Safety audits from Atlanta Public Schools and the GA Department of Homeland Security

I understand these are difficult and emotional times. Safety is the chief concern for us all. I have heard many great suggestions from parents over the last few days. Let us remain united in working together to ensure the safety of our students, staff, and community. I look forward to communicating with you soon.

Principal Dwight Hutson