

Subject: Fwd: MES Update - DO NOT REPLY ALL
From: Eric Bush <bushe@mokena159.org>
Date: 8/30/2023, 11:02 AM
To: Lisa Zielinski <zielinskil@mokena159.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Kelli MacMillan <macmillank@mokena159.org>
Date: Wed, Aug 30, 2023 at 10:24 AM
Subject: Re: MES Update - DO NOT REPLY ALL
To: Mark Cohen <cohenm@mokena159.org>
CC: Eric Bush <bushe@mokena159.org>

Dr Cohen,

With all do respect, people won't come forward and won't be able to talk to their children if they don't know anything was wrong. This is what I told you on Friday and Saturday and I told Eric yesterday when I finally was able to connect with him. This IS different from any other drill, very different, I know you know that. We are ignoring that to protect people that are NOT our students? Students are my priority but at this point I do not believe they are the priority guiding our response decisions. Parents won't complain about something we've mislead them to believe was normal. Parents won't dig a little deeper with their child on something we've mislead them to think went smoothly and routine. Why are we not telling the parents that their children were subjected to an event that they may have believed was a real danger? Why aren't we telling parents we are suppose to announce the drill in advance and that wasn't done; which led to an entirely different experience? That is the fundamental difference. Why are we continuing to withhold that? people don't know what children were subjected to was NOT normal and I insist we tell them. We are doing the students a disservice by not telling their parents so that the parents can determine if further counseling is necessary to which we should provide. Parents need to know the truth, period. Teachers are adults that can speak for themselves whereas a kindergartener can't verbalize what he wants for lunch and we expect he will report this? The kids themselves can't tell their parents which I believe is a limitation we're exploiting. If this were high school students it would never go down this way because the students would bring out the truth.

I am also a parent of a 3rd grader that experienced that fear. My daughter has NEVER been afraid at a drill. The reason she was afraid was b/c she didn't know it was a drill. She was afraid because usually she knows when's it ma coming that day and she wasn't told this time. She was afraid b/c at no point in during the drill did her teacher tell console them and explain to the it was only a drill. She verbalized that to me. She told me her teacher didn't tell the class it was a drill at any point until after, which leads me to believe the teacher was scared as well. She said it went on for "20 min". She told me kids in class were crying and scared and one girl (by name) was crying saying she thought she was going to die. The reason she told me is b/c I asked open ended specific questions based on my background knowledge. From a parent perspective without the BOE insight though, I can see the district hasn't been forthright, and I'm not ok with that. Especially concerning our students and their

mental health. There is NO excuse. I am having a very hard time not at least reaching out to every parent in [REDACTED] class to tell them about it because I know kids in that class were scared. This has weighed on me heavily and troubled me everyday since Friday. Not only them but I know for certain there were other classrooms, I can get you those teachers names if you need them.

If you really were worried about our students you'd tell their parents the truth so that they can have a real conversation about the fear they experienced that WAS VERY different this time - like my own daughter! We should offer counseling sessions. I know one girl specifically that should get that option.

When you say a communication will need to go out about the incident shortly what do you mean? Do you plan to lay out everything that really happened including the fact that students and staff potentially believed it was real? I'm not on board with any further communication that is anything less. Let's just do that now and then we can move forward together to review the incident report at conclusion and collaborate on places to improve. I have faith we can and will do what is appropriate from that point.

Also, you'd reported to me on our call at 3:23p Friday that you called the PD chief within 60 sec of the 911 call to call off police. The response we took from that point on therefore, was under your direction and I expect you will take accountability for that. I would like to know, in your report, why the event continued to progress to the point someone was walking down the halls trying to enter classrooms and making sure doors were locked after it was clear staff and students thought there was a REAL DANGER. What time did you set the record straight with all staff and students and let everyone know it a drill gone bad and call it off??

Thanks Dr Cohen,
Kelli MacMillan

PS [REDACTED] concept of time is not accurate, I'm not suggesting I believe 20 min. What I know however, is that she knows the difference between 2 min and 20 min. She knows the difference between 5 min and 20 min.

On Aug 30, 2023, at 8:59 AM, Mark Cohen <cohenm@mokena159.org> wrote:

Eric and Kelli,

I appreciate the concern for student and staff wellbeing. I share your concern Kelli, and I have been monitoring student and staff behaviors the last couple of days.

Since the drill I have been contacted by one parent. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I passed along his information to the Mokena Police Department.

We have not had any student issues since the event that I am aware of. I have checked in with Stacie Kittler, the lead social worker at MES, and she has reported no issues brought to her attention of trauma. Drills can be frightening to students under the best of circumstances and this one was no different, but no issues out of the ordinary have been brought to my attention by the staff.

I have had multiple conversations with the leaders of the two labor unions in the District. The conversations with both groups have been positive and they each are interested in putting safeguards in place so that an incident of this type does not happen again. I asked the leaders specifically about the wellbeing of staff and no issues have been reported.

A communication regarding this incident will need to go out in the near future. I look forward to having a conversation with the Board about it soon.

I will likely wrap up my investigation into this matter tomorrow, Friday at the latest. The care of our students and staff will always be the top priority. If you know of any students that require support please let me know and we will provide them with it. Thank you.

Mark

On Tue, Aug 29, 2023 at 3:52 PM Kelli MacMillan <macmillank@mokena159.org> wrote:

I am. As I said, trust is broken.

On Tue, Aug 29, 2023 at 3:26 PM Eric Bush <bushe@mokena159.org> wrote:

Kelli - Why are parents reaching out to you and not Dr. Cohen or Mrs. Chorley? Please inform them to follow proper chain of command and express any concerns or questions Dr. Cohen and/or Mrs. Chorley.

Thanks,

Eric

On Tue, Aug 29, 2023 at 2:09 PM Kelli MacMillan <macmillank@mokena159.org> wrote:

Dr. Cohen,

I will again reiterate our response to date has NOT acknowledged the trauma people were subjected to. We do NOT and should NOT be "patient" and wait until you "gather the information" to do what is right by our students and take steps to address that. I do not subscribe to the strategy of staying silent to this concern while we wait for your report, it should be done simultaneously as part of our response. It is not what is best for our students and staff, that's certain.

I have parents continuing to reach out to me and trust has been broken.

Kelli MacMillan

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From: **Eric Bush** <bushe@mokena159.org>
Date: Mon, Aug 28, 2023 at 10:15 PM
Subject: MES Update - DO NOT REPLY ALL
To: School Board <schoolboard@mokena159.org>

Good Evening Board - On Saturday August 26th at 5pm, Mark sent an email to the Board notifying us that he is conducting an investigation into the MES Drill that occurred on Friday August 25th. The Board should not be conducting their own interviews into the matter which might impede Mark's investigation. Legacy Board members have been trained on this topic in the past. New Board members have been completed a three hour orientation training along with a six hour Board retreat where the topic of investigations was completed. Board members should avoid the dance floor regarding day to day operations or by instructing Mark how to complete his investigation.

Mark provided the Board with an update today at 10:14am. At this point, the Board's will is for Mark to complete his investigation and report his findings to the Board. Once completed, the Board can then ask questions about the investigation and determine the appropriate course of action. Please be respectful of Mark's request for patience as he still has to oversee the day to day operations of three schools while he completes his investigation.

Regards,

Eric

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Dr. Mark Cohen
Superintendent
Mokena School District 159

