



Dear Wildcat Nation,

We would like to express our continued grief and anguish at the tragic events of the past week. The shooting at Oxford High School has tested the resolve of our students, families and staff like never before.

Our Wildcat community has been shaken to its core, and our hearts are with the families impacted by this unthinkable tragedy and those still recovering from their injuries. Please keep the victims and families in your thoughts and prayers.

When this unthinkable tragedy unfolded on the afternoon of Nov. 30, our staff and students acted swiftly and heroically, which undoubtedly prevented additional deaths and additional injuries by implementing our District's detailed emergency protocols and procedures. We cannot thank our students and staff enough for their quick and decisive actions and their bravery. We are also immensely thankful for the first responders, who responded quickly and literally ran into harm's way to prevent even more lives from being lost.

As many of you know, the first shots were fired during passing time between classes when hundreds of students were in the hallway transitioning from one classroom to the other. Before the shooter was able to walk a short distance to enter the main hallway, students and staff had already entered classrooms, locked doors, erected makeshift barricades and locked down or fled according to their training. The suspect was not able to gain access to a single classroom.

We have asked an independent security consultant to review all district safety practices and procedures. An initial review including review of videotaped evidence show staff and students' response to the shooter was efficient, exemplary and definitely prevented further deaths and injuries.

In response to family concerns, we have also begun the process of reviewing attendance records prior to this event as well as collecting and reviewing any and all communications that the district may have received. At this time, we agree with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office assessment that previous incidents, including those addressed in the Nov. 12 communication to families, are unrelated to the events of Nov. 30.

Following yesterday's press conference by the Oakland County Prosecutor, many of our parents have understandably been asking for the school's version of events leading up to the shooting. It's critically important to the victims, our staff and our entire community that a full and transparent accounting be made. To that end, I've asked for a third-party investigation be conducted so we leave no stone unturned, including any and all interaction the student had with staff and students. Because that may take time, we wanted to provide some additional specific information about the events that transpired.



On Nov. 29, the suspect was discovered by a teacher to be viewing images of bullets on his cell phone during class. The suspect met with a counselor and another staff member and indicated he and his mother recently went to the shooting range and that shooting sports are a family hobby. Consistent with our school policies and procedures, the school attempted to make contact with the student's mother to discuss the incident but did not initially hear back. The next day, his parents confirmed his account.

On the morning of Nov. 30, a teacher observed concerning drawings and written statements that have been detailed in media reports, which the teacher reported to school counselors and the Dean of students. The student was immediately removed from the classroom and brought to the guidance counselor's office where he claimed the drawing was part of a video game he was designing and informed counselors that he planned to pursue video game design as a career. The student's parents were also called in. Because it was difficult to reach the parents, the student remained in the office for an hour and a half while counselors continued to observe, analyze and speak with the student. While waiting for his parents to arrive, the student verbalized his concern he would be missing homework assignments and requested his science homework, which he then worked on while in the office. At no time did counselors believe the student might harm others based on his behavior, responses and demeanor, which appeared calm. In addition, despite media reports, whether or not the gun was in his backpack has not been confirmed by law enforcement to our knowledge nor by our investigation at this time.

While both of his parents were present, counselors asked specific probing questions regarding the potential for self-harm or harm to others. His answers, which were affirmed by his parents during the interview, led counselors to again conclude he did not intend on committing either self-harm or harm to others. The student's parents never advised the school district that he had direct access to a firearm or that they had recently purchased a firearm for him.

Counseling was recommended for him, and his parents were notified that they had 48 hours to seek counseling for their child or the school would contact Child Protective Services. When the parents were asked to take their son home for the day, they flatly refused and left without their son, apparently to return to work.

Given the fact that the child had no prior disciplinary infractions, the decision was made he would be returned to the classroom rather than sent home to an empty house. These incidents remained at the guidance counselor level and were never elevated to the principal or assistant principal's office. While we understand this decision has caused anger, confusion and prompted understandable questioning, the counselors made a judgment based on their professional training and clinical experience and did not have all the facts we now know. Our counselors are deeply committed longstanding school members who have dedicated their lives to supporting students and addressing student mental health and behavioral issues.



Again, I have personally asked for a third-party review of all the events of the past week because our community and our families deserve a full, transparent accounting of what occurred. We also plan to make regular updates to our families and community. Trained mental health professionals and grief counselors with experience in coping with school tragedies are available for anyone who needs support at this difficult moment. Information about counseling is available on the [district's website](#).

We have been asked by some parents regarding our plans for continuing our children's learning and education in the wake of this tragedy. We have already begun to discuss the appropriate path and timeline with trained grief counselors, safety experts, law enforcement, our school employees and our families on the best way to help our community grieve, process, be together, and continue their education.

Thank you again for your outpouring of love and support for our Wildcat families during this incredibly difficult time. The unparalleled support from our community and neighboring communities gives me hope that we can and will persevere and emerge stronger. Please continue to pray for the victims and their families, the injured and pray for the strength to carry on in the days ahead.

Oxford StrOng,

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Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, 10 North Washington Street, Oxford, MI 48371, (248) 969-5004.