

Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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February 7, 2024

Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District A Message From The Superintendent

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Dear Families and Staff,

I wanted to reach out to you about a situation at the Middle School last fall and more recent media coverage about those events. It makes sense to first provide some clarification around the District's protocols when potentially dangerous situations arise involving students.

I need to state clearly and unequivocally that the District determined our students were not in jeopardy at any time during these events. The District maintained an ongoing dialogue with our guidance counselors and supervising teachers, and collaborated on handling the situation. The District also consulted with local law enforcement officials and maintained a police presence as well. The situation was identified and monitored, student safety was accounted for, the District intervened, and the matter was resolved without incident.

The District provides communications to parents and other constituents on a wide range of topics, including any number of types of issues that are generating questions and concerns. In this situation, however, we determined that it did not rise to the level of requiring a public announcement and that making an announcement might be inflammatory, generating new issues concerning staff and student safety. Regrettably, the current overload of false or inaccurate information, and the concerns it can generate vindicates our decision to be discreet about this situation last fall.

CFAUSD - Jeff Holmes, Superintendent of Schools
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However, this parade of misinformation provides good cause for me to share how we approach these situations. I hope that understanding more about our process will help our stakeholders appreciate how these decisions are really made. Covering up information has never been our goal and suggesting that we treat sensitive student behavior and disciplinary situations as an opportunity for secrecy is, quite simply, false.

As an initial matter, it is unfortunate when irresponsible, quasi-media personalities sensationalize these situations. Their comments are not accurate and potentially dangerous. They strangely complain that we provide them with no information, but report on events as though they are fully informed. It is manipulative beyond measure and the citizens of our District—and certainly the faculty and administration that addressed this issue successfully—deserve better. For our constituents, we are sorry that the law does not allow us to provide more information than we do when commentators spin events in our District just to frighten them.

When the District is made aware of concerning behavior or incidents involving students, we have an obligation to thoroughly investigate, but also must account for the welfare of all children, including the subject of the investigation. This is often a complex process that requires care and discretion.

There are numerous factors we consider before determining next steps, including working closely with law enforcement to follow appropriate safety protocols. Information is released publicly only after careful review and consultation with all concerned to decide what is permissible and appropriate to share more broadly. Our goal is to balance our commitment to transparency with student privacy rights and maintaining the integrity of ongoing investigations or situations.

Please know that we take these situations very seriously. Many of us are parents too and have kids in our schools, just like the parents we serve. We approach these matters with the utmost care, following all applicable laws, and with expert guidance to properly review each unique case. If a situation warrants informing a broader audience, we will provide updates to our constituents as we have always done.

Thank you for understanding the complexity of these situations and the difficult decisions we must make legally and ethically. We appreciate the community's trust and support and we could

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not be more emphatic about this as professionals, members of our community, and parents: ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students remains our top priority.

Sincerely,
Jeff Holmes
Superintendent

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