

December 8, 2021

Dear Newtown Families and Staff,

As you know, we are approaching the 9th anniversary of 12/14 and this day is always difficult for so many staff, students, and families. Aside from the emotion this day evokes, we often have to deal with calls or anonymous threats that raise levels of stress for the entire school community. In recent days, schools across the State continue to face threats following the tragedy in Michigan.

At last night's meeting, I proposed that we move to a remote learning day on Tuesday, December 14. Three years ago, we evacuated Sandy Hook School due to a threatening call to the main office. Anonymous threats add to the level of anxiety, and our goal this year is to minimize the level of stress on students, parents, and staff given the current climate. We plan to use a "compacted" schedule, which will begin an hour later and dismiss an hour earlier. Details for the remote learning day (including when devices will be sent home) will be shared with you by your respective building principals tomorrow, Thursday, December 9.

When we have been in school on 12/14, we have included only age-appropriate messaging in remembrance of the day. At the lower levels, we have never discussed the anniversary with our younger students and have left that up to parents.

Therefore, our message should be simple for our younger students. The district has decided to use a remote learning day on 12/14 and students will be using their devices to practice their skills as digital learners for the first time this year. This will prepare them if we should use another remote day for a weather-related closure. For secondary students who may be well aware of the issues currently impacting school districts, our messaging will be that we have moved to remote learning to avoid any disruption or distraction to education on 12/14. As we have always done for grades 7-12, the day will begin with a moment of silence. Should any questions or dialogue occur in remote classrooms regarding 12/14, teachers will be prepared to have private conversations with children and their parents, as appropriate. Private discussions and remembrances of 12/14 can still occur in the home as parents see fit.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the victims of 12/14. We know this is a very emotional time of year, and we hope that moving to a remote learning day will relieve some of the anxiety and stress that often accompanies this day.

Respectfully,

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent