

APS NEWS RELEASE

Akron Public Schools Maintains Academic Focus and Commitment to Safety Processes

Akron Public Schools (APS) continues to forge ahead with innovative learning experiences, demonstrating that robust safety protocols can coexist with academic progress. This balance was recently put to the test at the I PROMISE School (IPS), where a potential threat was swiftly addressed without derailing the district's educational mission.

IPS Principal Stephanie Davis communicated with families about a security concern that had arisen. A teacher discovered a piece of paper with "Death Notice" handwritten on one side and names of staff and scholars on the other. The incident, initially described by the teachers' union (AEA) as a "grave safety incident," was promptly evaluated using the district's nationally recognized threat assessment process. After Principal Davis followed all safety protocols and contacted her immediate supervisor, the District took prompt action to address the matter.

The comprehensive assessment, which included interviews with all potentially involved parties, concluded that the incident posed no real threat. Principal Davis revealed that "a scholar had recreated a journal from a cartoon series as a playful gesture among friends." However, she stressed that all security concerns are taken seriously and investigated completely, regardless of intent.

"After continued evaluation of the situation, additional efforts were made - nothing was minimized or dismissed," emphasized Superintendent Dr. Michael Robinson. "This is why we have tiered systems of support - not only for our scholars but for our staff," Dr. Robinson stated. "Our responsibility is to cultivate our scholars' social emotional learning. Discipline involves teaching and, at times, issuing consequences."

The superintendent added, "We all witnessed the recent event in Georgia and that is why we are highly aware of the importance of school safety. This is key to our Blueprint for Excellence - The Strategic Plan, Cornerstone I: Culture of Safety and Belonging." Robinson continued, "We take every potential threat seriously. As superintendent, I am deeply engaged with what happens in our schools, and transparency is a core value of this system and administration. The unfortunate incident was unforeseeable, but it does not define IPS or our

district. To suggest otherwise is reckless and undermines the dedication of our scholars, employees, and community.”

“As the superintendent, I am keenly engaged with what is happening in our schools. This is an unfortunate situation that could not be predicted - it doesn’t define I Promise or our district,” stated Dr. Robinson. “The press release is reckless and detrimental to our scholars, educators, and community. APS teachers work tirelessly every day to support our scholars. We acted swiftly and appropriately in response. Unfortunately, APS has repeatedly been attacked by those who should stand with us. Often times they are providing the media with half truths and negativity, portraying us in a way that is both demeaning and damaging. This narrative does not reflect the integrity of our district, or the families who trust us to educate their children, or the potential gravity of this situation. APS is still strong! APS is safe! APS will continue educating our scholars at the optimum level!”

Further, it must be stated that APS is troubled that in the AEA’s news release regarding the incident the union includes information that compromises the scholar’s federally protected privacy rights. APS vigorously protects scholars’ privacy and educational records and expects our affiliated organizations to do the same.

This incident highlights Akron Public Schools proactive approach to safety, which begins at the start of each school year with clear communication to families about expectations, consequences, and the importance of adhering to established security protocols. Scholars found to have made threats face disciplinary action under our Code of Conduct and potential legal and criminal consequences.

Superintendent Robinson sees this situation as an educational opportunity to talk to our scholars, both at school and at home about responsible behavior. “This is a chance to talk to our children both at school and at home about responsible behavior and the consequences of their actions, even if intended as a joke,” he noted.

As Akron Public Schools navigates these challenges, the District remains focused on its primary mission: providing innovative, high-quality education to its students. By efficiently addressing security concerns and protecting student privacy, APS demonstrates its ability to maintain a safe and respectful learning environment without compromising academic progress.

The District continues to implement cutting-edge educational programs and experiences, ensuring that scholars receive a forward-thinking education that prepares them for future success. This incident serves as a testament to APS's commitment to balancing safety, privacy, and academic excellence, proving that with the right protocols in place, schools can swiftly address concerns while keeping their focus firmly on education and scholar achievement.

That is why we are here.