



Pearl River School District

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Marco F. Pochintesta
Superintendent of Schools

June 15, 2018

Dear Parents,

In addition to all of the celebratory events that occur each spring in our schools, it is also time to administer a yearly parent survey. Last year, we implemented a new survey developed by the U.S. Department of Education. This survey is called the School Climate Survey (EDSCLS) and was developed by education experts to assess student engagement, school safety and the learning environment. The measurement of school climate will provide us with the necessary data to identify school needs, set goals, and track progress toward improvement.

The 2016-17 parent survey identified numerous strengths in our schools. Overall, the schools did very well with relationships, emotional safety, physical safety, emergency readiness, instructional environment and physical environment. Areas that suggested greater attention were substance abuse-drugs/alcohol/vaping; and mental health-social/emotional programs and supports.

I would like to highlight some of the actions taken this year to address some of these issues.

Substance Abuse- In addition to the information that students receive in their health classes at the MS and HS, all faculty and staff at the MS and HS received information via a presentation on a dangerous new trend that is on the rise across the country– vaping/juuling. All HS students in grades 8-12 received training on the dangers of vaping in their PE classes. Students at the MS attended a presentation by administration and Orangetown Police Department (OPD) to learn about the dangers of vaping and drug use. The second year of the new DARE “Keepin it Real” program with all seventh graders began this spring with OPD pushing into science classes for instruction. I sent information and resources to all parents about vaping/juuling/e-cigarettes in my October letter to families. A Parent University was held in the fall to provide parents with information regarding vaping and teen drug use, and PRSD was a co-sponsor of the spring presentation of *The Perfect Storm* to inform the community of the current prescription drug epidemic in the county.

Mental Health/ Wellness- Last spring, all staff completed a suicide prevention training course sponsored by the *The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide*. This year, our school psychologists, counselors, and several administrators participated in an all-day Youth Mental Health First Aid training presented by our school social worker. This training helps identify signs and symptoms of student mental health issues in order to be able to provide students and families with resources.

Working with the HS counselors, social worker and psychologists, a new web page for parents was developed - *Keeping Teenagers Safe* that can be accessed on the HS website and provides parents

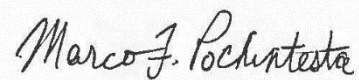
with resources on a number of topics, including depression, grief, and substance abuse, to name a few of the more prominent issues that affect teenagers today.

In developing our school budget for this year, the addition of a school social worker in order to support students' and families' social/emotional needs at the elementary level was a priority.

Once again this year, the survey will be sent via email to parents of students at each school through our K-12 Alert system. If you have a child in the middle school and high school, you will receive two survey emails, one with a link to the high school survey and one with a link to the middle school survey. If you have several children in one school, you will receive one email and will be asked to complete the survey once for that school.

The district has always valued the feedback that we receive from parents regarding our schools. I hope that you will participate in this year's survey. I expect the survey emails to be distributed later today and we ask that you respond by July 6th. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marco J. Pochintesta". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned on a light gray rectangular background.