



# CLARENCE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Dear Middle School Parents and Guardians,

As you may know, schools across the country have seen an increase in non-credible threats over the past year. They have often come in the form of troubling texts, verbal comments, and social media posts, and they have caused unneeded stress and anxiety for many school communities. Further, the threats have regularly been complicated to investigate, and as a result, difficult to identify as non-credible.

While the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) understandably restricts what public schools can share about specific student incidents, we wanted to provide a bit of additional detail on the process we use here in Clarence to determine if a threat is credible.

First and foremost, we take all threats seriously. As soon as we learn of a troubling statement or situation, we immediately conduct a thorough investigation. This typically involves interviewing witnesses and reviewing videotape from our camera system. Once we identify the student who made the threat, we have one of our trained staff members conduct an official risk assessment and contact the police.

If we find that our Code of Conduct was violated, we suspend the individual from school—often for a period of 5-days along with what is called a “superintendent’s hearing” to see if additional suspension time is warranted. Besides the District’s response, members of our local law enforcement conduct their own threat assessment. If they determine there may be cause for concern, they do not hesitate to search the home or make an arrest. We are thankful for the partnership we have developed with the New York State Troopers, as well as the Erie County Sheriff’s Office, and grateful for the role they play in keeping our community safe.

While we know it can be difficult to receive communications like this from school, we wanted to share it for two reasons. First, we wanted you to know that we are committed to ensuring that CMS continues to be a safe space for students and that we will not tolerate threats of violence. Second, we are asking that you take a moment to talk with your child about the power of words. Non-credible comments made in jest or out of frustration cannot be tolerated and they can lead to undesirable consequences for learners who never meant any actual harm.

As always, thank you for your support, your understanding, and your partnership when it comes to keeping our students safe.

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