

December 9, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians of Great Oaks Charter School,

Today, we announced a “Shelter in Place” for a medical need that occurred. The students and staff responded wonderfully. This “Shelter in Place” lasted approximately five minutes and students were able to then resume their normal activities. During a “Lock-In” or a “Shelter in Place”, students are able to function within the classroom, but remain out of the hallways so that personnel can attend to any number of different types of incidents. These types of incidents do not typically involve the potential of harm to students, but additional students in the hallway make it difficult to quickly resolve the situation.

### **What do our terms mean?**

With any incident or reports Great Oaks takes all precautions, often starting with limitations to student and staff movement for assessment and investigation purposes. Lock-Ins and Shelter in Place announcements to students are used when there is a need to clear hallways and to allow for easy access to areas, provide privacy for a student, or as a general safety measure. The lock-in procedure does not typically indicate that students or staff are at risk, but that there is a situation that requires immediate attention from a number of staff members. While getting this call can be alarming, we want you to be aware that we always operate with an abundance of caution.

The school will sometimes call for a lock-in/lock-out procedure. This requires that all students remain in their rooms, there is no movement in the hallways, any visitors in the building must stay in the building, and no outside visitors are allowed in the building. These are typically coordinated with the Bridgeport Police Department and can be called for reasons such as serious medical issues, intense police activity outside the building and in the surrounding area, or a situation where safety may be at risk in a portion of the building. For example, the school would enter a lock-in/lock-out procedure for threats made against the school on Social Media until the Police investigated the situation. This would remain in place until the Police determined it was safe to do so.

Finally, the most intense call we have is a “Code Red”. Code Red indicates that there is an intruder in the building or that there is immediate danger to students and staff. This typically requires students to stay in place and seek cover. This is typically practiced as a drill with members of the First Responders Community on hand to monitor and observe.

### **What are our steps and procedures?**

The safety and welfare of our students is always our primary concern. We are proud to announce that we have recently entered into an agreement with Metro-Guard who will be providing on-site security guards for our school as well as additional security training with staff. We would also like you to be aware of the following?

- Additional Security Cameras are being strategically placed in addition to our over 40 cameras already located in the building to assist in identifying any areas of concern
- Safety plans are periodically reviewed with the Bridgeport Police Department on a regular basis to ensure compliance and to hear ideas for improvement
- Any threats to the school in building are immediately turned over to the police department for review and recommendations on how to proceed

- All incidents are reviewed with administration and relevant personnel to improve safety measures and continue improvement around security
- Code Red drills, shelter in place drills, fire drills, security scenarios, and walkthroughs with members of the Bridgeport First Responder Community to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement to continue to improve all safety outcomes
- Students are engaged in Social and Emotional Learning programs throughout the year to help create a positive learning environment for all students
- Mental Health Supports and Protocols are in place to assist students connect with Social Workers and Mental Health Professionals as needed
- Access to mediation services with School Culture

### **How you can help**

We ask that you please assist us in the following manner:

- Monitor and/or limit your child's Social Media activity and attempt to reduce their negative interactions online as much as possible
- Report to your child's teacher, school culture, or administration, any issues that may be occurring with students (even if it is off campus) so we can engage students in mediation activities to limit escalation
- Ask your child to report any activity or challenges that are disruptive to the learning environment to their teacher, school culture, or administration
- For more information on Social Media and Applications to be aware of, you may want to consult this resource: [Apps to Watch Out For](#) by Common Sense Media.

Some additional resources include:

[Privacy and Internet Safety](#) - Common Sense Media

[Safety Guides for Families](#) - Internet Safety Concepts

[Protecting Kids Online](#) - U.S. Federal Government Trade Commission

[Anxiety and Anxiety Disorders in Children: A guide for Parents](#)

[Talking to Children about Violence, A Guide for Parents and Teachers](#)

We take our responsibility to educate and keep your children safe in a supportive community seriously. Please feel free to contact us with any suggestions or concerns.

In Partnership,

The Great Oaks Administrative Team