



LEAD-DEADWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT #40-1

320 South Main Street
Lead, South Dakota 57754
Phone: 605-717-3890 Fax: 605-717-2813



MISSION

Our students will graduate equipped with the skills needed to be successful and responsible citizens.

Superintendent

Dr. Erik Person

Secretary

Mary Schumacher

Board Members

Suzanne Rogers, President
Tim Madsen, Vice-President
Amber Diers
John Rystrom
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March 14, 2024

Dear Lead-Deadwood Families,

I am writing this letter to follow up with you on the lockdown at the Lead-Deadwood Middle School and High School yesterday. My intent is to offer some explanation and closure to the incident. As we had indicated in our communications yesterday, the lockdown was in response to police activity in the City of Lead, more specifically, it was a domestic incident at a residence on Mill Street. I will go into more detail on the school district's response and handling of our business, but providing more details on that incident itself is not our place. Whatever information law enforcement shares with the media and the public is in their wheelhouse.

The entire domestic incident occurred away from the school campus, so I am not sure when it started. Just before 1:00 p.m., our school resource officer observed one of the parties in that domestic incident was traveling at a rapid rate in a vehicle away from the scene in the direction of the school buildings in Lead. The SRO made the real-time decision to call a soft lockdown at the school, which basically means business as usual except classroom doors are closed, no-one goes in or out of the buildings and school officials engage in a heightened alert status. That was a good call because historically in other places there have been incidents of things occurring in proximity to a school building suddenly spilling over onto the school campus and impacting students. Also, with our particular setup, we have students exiting the school buildings throughout the day and hundreds of students traveling at different times between the two adjacent buildings. At one point the SRO briefly lost visual contact with the person, so she made the decision to move the school buildings into a hard lockdown, which means all doors are locked, no-one moves about within the building, instruction stops, hallways and common spaces are emptied, and everyone remains behind locked doors to await further instruction or until they are forced to react to something that is happening within the building. Again, this was the right call at the moment with the information at hand. This all happened very fast, and the response was swift, which is a good thing. Within a few minutes it was determined that there was no threat on school campus, and school administration made the decision to move back down to soft lockdown status until the incident in town was resolved and traffic flow in that neighborhood was restored. The district's reaction to all of this was in coordination with law enforcement and was precautionary for the safety of students, in a situation that nobody knew the scope of or what the eventual resolution would be. The schools remained in soft lockdown for the rest of the school day, and as students passed between classes between the middle school and high school, they did so with administration and police monitoring the passing. At no time was the City of Deadwood impacted, so the elementary school was never in any form of lockdown. The impact for elementary students and families was for those who would be traveling home to Lead at the end of the school day. Thankfully, the entire incident came to a resolution just a few minutes before school released.

I hope the explanation above gives you all some insight into the thought process and the actions taken by school officials. At all times student and staff safety was the top priority. In addition to student safety, our jobs as school leaders include providing a sense of calm in stressful situations.

Unfortunately, the words “hard lockdown” do not instill a sense of calm, and I know that we had some students and staff who were stressed or even afraid during that time. That is why we try to provide as much information as possible or appropriate during these times, and that is why we moved pretty quickly from hard lockdown back to soft lockdown. You will notice that as parents, you received a series of messages as the situation changed. I am proud of our admin team, our school secretaries, our teachers, our maintenance staff, and every other school employee who worked together professionally and efficiently yesterday. Thankfully we learned that there was really no danger to our students, but we had to react in a way that prepared us for any unfortunate possibility. What I saw as we worked through the situation encouraged me. Thank you to our dedicated professionals who were able to change gears and adapt as needed to keep our kids safe.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Erik', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Erik Person, Superintendent