Greetings Walker-Winter Families,

I am reaching out to you to let you know that your Walker-Winter Family is here for our students, families and each other. In the wake of the tragedy in Florida, there is a trend of threats toward schools across America and most recently, our own school district. I want to take this opportunity to share with you what we are doing at Walker to support the safety and emotional welfare of our kids, families and staff:

Relationships- Our main goal at Walker is always safety and supporting the emotional welfare of our students. The positive relationships we build and continue to grow with our students and families is the first step and essential towards creating and maintaining a safe school environment. Strong, trusting relationships allow students to feel comfortable to do the right thing such as reporting suspicious activity or reporting unsafe behaviors to a staff and parents.

Safety drills- Throughout the year we have scheduled fire, tornado and lockdown drills to familiarize students and staff with the process of what to do during various safety situations. We have age appropriate conversations about safety scenarios and provide students with age appropriate instructions in order to keep kids physically safe and emotionally safe. Talking about a lockdown with elementary age students is very sensitive.

Here are some talking points that we use at school when discussing the reason for safety drills and specifically lockdown drills:

- *We practice safety drills to become really good at them. Safety first.*
- *If there is a fire, we need to evacuate the building so we get far away from the fire. It is highly unlikely that we will ever have a fire, but we practice a fire drill to become very good at it.*
- *A lockdown drill is just as important as a fire drill. A lockdown drill helps us stay safe from bad people. Most people are good.*
- *Unfortunately, there are some bad people in this world and we have to practice lockdowns to make sure we keep each other safe. We want to be prepared if a bad person got into our school and was trying to hurt us.*
- *I want to remind you that it is highly unlikely that that this would ever happen, but we have to practice just in case.*
- *You are safe.*

We continue to create a culture of safety first throughout the school year
Protocols- The following protocols are in place to support a safe environment and we appreciate your support:

- All exteriors doors are always locked throughout the school day.
- All students/parents/visitors must enter the main entrances on the east and west side of our building.
- If a parent needs to talk with a teacher, please call the school to set up an appointment or report to the main office and our secretary, Mrs.Brooks, can take a message for you.

- You'll notice a sign reminding all parents, especially 4th grade parents, that for safety reasons, you are not permitted to walk down to your child's classroom. Please wait in the lobby or office.
- Parents/visitors must have a valid ID present at the main doors. Parents/guardians must have an ID also to check out a student early from school.
- Our main door has a camera and our office staff will buzz you in.

Since the Florida tragedy, we have been reviewing our safety protocols with staff and students. We are conducting some extra lockdown drills as well. In addition to what we are doing at Walker, here are some articles that support how you can talk to your kids about this sensitive subject at home:

- http://www.wwcsd.net/parents-students/child-safety/emergency-crisis-resources/

- https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers

- https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/explaining-the-news-to-our-kids#

We are fortunate to have an amazing Walker-Winter Family. Our students, families and staff are all here to support each other. I want to remind you that in addition to all of our great teachers and staff, we also have an amazing social worker (Mrs. Pitzer who is here Tuesdays and Thursdays) and school psychologist (Ms. Steffan) that can be available to support our students. We have a great team to serve our Walker Family. There are also opportunities for you you to volunteer. Our PTO is always here supporting great things at Walker. Our Walker Watch D.O.G.S is another great way that you can be involved.

- Walker PTO: Call the office at 734-419-2780 to be connected
- Walker Watch D.O.G.S.: Call the office at 734-419-2780

Together we will keep our kids, staff and families safe.

Yours in Education and Safety,
Julie Mytych
Principal