

COMSTOCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Dr. Jeffrey J. Thoenes, Superintendent
Jeff.Thoenes@ComstockPS.org

December 14, 2023

Comstock Colleagues,

Since Tuesday evening, I've fielded inquiries from a few staff members regarding the timing, responsiveness, and detail of District communications. Given this feedback, I thought it might be helpful to share how these crisis or emergency-response communications work and the limitations and restrictions under which I am operating.

Given the nature of the events, please be aware that upon the arrival of deputies from the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department at Comstock High School on Tuesday evening, an active criminal investigation began. Acting under the direction of the KCSD, I am only able to communicate information about actions the District is taking such as not having school at CHS on Wednesday; since all of the witnesses and suspects in the case are juveniles, I am not allowed to share information about the investigation including names, grades, descriptions, video, or other evidence. Any information about the ongoing investigation is released by the KCSD (or not) when and how the KCSD decides is best.

Please also keep in mind that social media, while readily available and quick, is not a reliable source of information. Instead, it is typically filled with gossip, innuendo, guessing, and speculation. In contrast, all District communications must be accurate, properly worded, and helpful. As a result, District communications are almost always slower and become available to the public after the general public has shared their thoughts on social media. I will always share information that contributes transparently to community understanding when it is proper to do so, and that is factual as it pertains to the events in question. Thanks for your understanding as we work through the challenges presented by Tuesday's events.

In response to these events, and after consulting with Athletic Director Justin Ansel, CHS Principal Mary Spade, Assistant Superintendent Jill Ansel, and the KCSD, I am directing that the District undertake the following security enhancements immediately which will be reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness at the start of the new year in January:

- 1) Only immediate family members and District staff may attend home high school athletic events;
- 2) An administrative representative or designee will attend all away JV and varsity boys' basketball games; and
- 3) The School Resource Officer, Deputy Noble, and other sheriff deputies as needed, will attend all home high school athletic events.

In addition, the District will continue to cooperate fully with the ongoing criminal investigation being led by the KCSD.

It is worth noting that the District was recently awarded \$400,000 from the State of Michigan through a 31AA Grant which will allow the District to address security concerns throughout the District. I will share details of this grant as soon as more information becomes available.

Be assured that the safety and security of our students, families, and staff are our top priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Jeffrey J. Thoenes". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Dr. Jeffrey J. Thoenes

3010 Gull Road | Kalamazoo, MI 49048 | 269-250-8907 | 269-250-8908 fax

