

Emergency Procedure Policy – for field trips

On May 15th, there was a horrific bus accident involving 8th grade students, staff, and parents of Charles W. Henry Elementary. We are thankful for the Pennsylvania State Trooper cadets who assisted with the rescue, minimized injury and loss of life. Many students and staff are facing months if not years of physical rehabilitation and psychological recovery. In the weeks after the accident, it was clear that there was not a determined plan to alleviate the confusion & stress or give support to those affected. Summary of what has happened to date. Many parents asked for information from the school administration that was unable to give complete answers. Parents then related calling offices within 440 and still being unable to receive answers about the accident, continuing their child's education, and future school planning. Parents frequently had to rely on other parents through a contact list that they created. Information was obtained by retained lawyers instead of being offered by the district. When we looked for more clarification for our questions, we found that there is no policy in place for emergency procedures. The district must have a formal policy for emergencies on field trips.

This policy must include:

- Who is in charge? At the school and district levels and what are their roles and scope. Contact information needs to be included and regularly updated - Transportation, Special Services, Legal, and Curricular and Instruction at least. All affected parents should receive the same information to alleviate confusion
- A clear map of who, at the district administration level, will obtain accident information: vehicle insurance policies, police reports, and the return of personal property.
- Parent notification about the impending processes. For example: We should know that our medical insurances will likely deny services related to any vehicular accident. We should be told exactly what to do and be provided with information to ensure the continued care of our children.
- An outline of how long students would have access to district provided counseling services. The district highlights trauma informed practices, but counseling was initially set to be removed from Henry at the end of the first week. Most of the students involved did not have the opportunity to participate because they were not back to school.
- The medical information that parents need to give over to the school. It was unclear to parents what relevant and necessary information was needed for children to return to school and maintain their medical health privacy. In addition, there did not seem to be a logical action from the information that was given.
- The path to getting students back to their education as they are ready. There were several students who were ready to learn but unable to physically come to school. It took 3 weeks, for instruction to begin again, a teacher visited students after school. The use of available technology could have been a key solution. Instruction could be live streamed or recorded for anytime access. Student could use interactive platforms like SKYPE to participate in class. Weekly homework packets could help students maintain their educational process. *There is no*

reason that so many people stated that it wasn't a problem because this accident happened at the end of the school year. What if the next one happens in October?

In addition, any company involved in an injury causing accident should not transport any other school district students until a thorough safety investigation has been completed. Even though parents asked for another bus company, Werner was used to transport of 6th graders on their school trip in June.

This is just a beginning based on the things that faltered in this time of crisis. I would be happy to help form an emergency procedure policy with you. Parents directly affected by this tragedy want to participate in drafting this policy.

Again, our children, staff, and parents have suffered through a catastrophic accident. Regardless, everything that happened after that had to be deliberate and purposeful. Corrective measures are necessary. If not, what child are you willing to offer up next time?