



Washington Elementary School District

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Dear Orangewood Families and Staff,

I want to provide you with an update regarding this week's incident. We understand your concerns and feelings of frustration. Please be assured that the safety of our students and staff remains our highest priority. Because this is part of an ongoing, sensitive criminal investigation, the information we can share is limited. That said, I want to provide you with the latest updates and let you know the steps we are taking to strengthen safety at Orangewood.

Through our internal investigation, we have learned that the suspect is a former Orangewood student, who attended from 2012–2015. Initial reports indicated he gained access to the campus behind a student who was buzzed in; further investigation revealed that he entered through the interior lobby door, which was unlocked, and walked in with a student who was tardy. As part of the investigation, a staff member has been placed on administrative leave.

We understand how alarming this situation has been and want you to know that we are reviewing every aspect of our safety procedures and communication to ensure that an event like this does not happen again. Some of the immediate steps we have begun include:

- Reinforcing procedures for greeting guests and ensuring all visitors sign in;
- Ensuring staff ID badges are worn and clearly visible;
- Reviewing protocols for securing the lobby;
- Retraining staff on interior security, including locking all classrooms.
- In addition, a member of the District Security Team will be on campus for the remainder of the year, and we are applying for a School Safety Grant to secure a School Resource Officer.

At the district level, our leadership and crisis teams are conducting an extensive debrief. All district staff will participate in refresher training on school safety during our districtwide professional development day. The WESD security team will also be researching improved visitor management systems to implement across all schools.

Many of you have reached out, asking how you can support the school, the student, and their family. It is truly heartening to see our community come together during such a difficult time. I want to let you know that our Social Services and Safety and Security team have been on campus since the incident began, providing much needed and appreciated support. Additionally, a community mental health organization will have counselors on campus to support staff next week.

Accountability remains a priority. We are committed to handling this matter with transparency and integrity while respecting the ongoing criminal investigation. We will continue to communicate with you as we learn more and as additional safety measures are put in place. Please remember, there is an evolving situation and we will do our best to keep you informed. Thank you for your continued support and trust as we work together to ensure the safety and well-being of our entire Orangewood community. Please feel free to reach out if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Emily Paterson
Principal
