

# New Discoveries Montessori Academy

Discover Something New



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December 18, 2012

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In response to the tragedy that occurred in Connecticut on Friday, December 14, 2012 I offer up the following information for the benefit of you and your children.

Student safety at New Discoveries Montessori Academy is a priority, and we have taken many steps to ensure the safety of our students and staff:

- Building and site crisis plan
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- Use of security camera technologies
- Electronic locking systems. The only door that is open during the day is the main entrance. Internally, we are able to lock down both classroom wings with the press of a button.
- Lock down procedures and drills (five per school year)
- Visitor check-in protocols
- Ongoing partnership with the Hutchinson Police Department. I will be meeting with Chief Dan Hatten this Friday to review protocol relative to our current floor plan and possible safety breeches and/or inconsistencies.

We are concerned about the safety of all of the children in our community. We must be careful as we talk to our children that the violent acts do not carry over to the way we treat each other. Adults must role model care for all children and for each other.

I offer the following suggestions for you as you help your children cope during this difficult time. This is a portion of what Daron VanderHeiden, Hutchinson Public School Superintendent recently shared with Hutchinson Public School families:

**Adult's Role:** Try to be calm, reassuring, and focused for the children. Parents and guardians need to get the support they need from other adults so they are able to effectively guide the children. Talk about family and community values, communication, and treating each other in a caring way.

**Talk and Listen:** Find out what the children's fears and concerns are and address them as directly and calmly as possible. Reassure them that you, extended family members, and other adults are here to help and protect. Give children time to talk, follow their lead – when they are ready to return to their regular routine, let them. If they have further concerns, they will probably come back to talk. Let them know they can talk at any time.

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Our mission is to provide children with a quality education that prepares them intellectually, physically, socially, creatively, and emotionally for our changing world and all its joys and challenges.

**Create a Safe Home Environment:** Turn off the TV. Constant images, strong emotions, and reports of the shooting are not helpful at this time. If you need to watch the news, do so after the children have gone to bed. If teenage children want to watch the news, make sure that you are with them to help process the information and images.

Keep to bedtime routines. A good antidote to stress is sleep. Children need reassurance at bedtime. Read to them, keep family faith traditions, and allow nightlights and hall lights to stay on. Some children may want extra assurance. Lying down with children, especially young ones, or sitting in a youth's room until they fall asleep may be helpful.

**Use Your Resources:** Community resources that are available to you and your families to help you talk to children include local churches, counselors, public health and sexual assault and domestic abuse programs.

**Start the Discussion:** Here are some remarks that might help you start a discussion with your children about events such as this. Use whatever is comfortable for you.

"What has happened is horrifying, and our hearts and brains are having a hard time taking it all in. What we know at this point is: (give facts, as you know them.)"

"When scary things happen, it is important to take a big breath or whatever it is you do to help calm down. Pay attention to the facts. Be careful not to spread rumors."

"It is still important for you and me to be able to express our feelings and share our thoughts and concerns. Do you want to talk about what has happened? We can talk whenever you want."

Be careful to avoid dramatizing the drama – try to calm yourself and others instead of fanning the excitement.

Please contact me at your convenience regarding your concerns about your child's safety at NDMA. I desire to partner with you in this important endeavor of serving your child.

Sincerely,



David L. Conrad

Superintendent, Building Operations Manager,  
Family and Community Liaison, Continuous Improvement Specialist