

East Pike Behavioral Response Presentation for the 10-26-26 Board meeting

I want to take some time this evening to address the behavioral challenges at East Pike Elementary School. Last meeting we heard from many concerned families, and recently, the question was raised as to why the community had not received a public statement, so I wanted to address that and share the steps we are taking as a district to respond.

I want to begin by acknowledging something that is both simple and important: All of the people in this room and throughout the community should want the same thing: a safe environment for all students that maximizes the opportunity to learn. When a parent sends their child to school, that parent

should have confidence that their child will be safe and able to thrive. We need to work together as a community to that end, and I want to thank the parents who are here to advocate for that.

I also recognize the impact these situations are having on our teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and other staff members. They come to school every day committed to educating children, and they deserve to work in an environment where their safety is taken seriously and where they feel that they have the resources and support necessary to do their jobs well.

That is what I expect of myself as superintendent, and my staff - to empower our faculty and staff to do their jobs at the highest level possible. And that is what our

community should expect of our school district.

As we address these challenges, we must recognize that we have responsibilities to **all** the children in our classrooms.

We have a responsibility to students in general education who need a safe, predictable, and productive environment in which to learn. They deserve consistent instruction, meaningful relationships with their teachers, and the opportunity to make academic and social progress without repeated interruptions.

We also have a responsibility to students with disabilities and other students who experience significant behavioral needs. These children deserve access to an appropriate education, individualized support,

and adults who understand that challenging behavior often requires thoughtful, consistent, and sometimes specialized intervention.

These responsibilities should not be in conflict. We do not have to choose between supporting a child with significant behavioral needs and protecting the learning environment for everyone else. We must build a system that does both.

That requires more than good intentions. It requires clear expectations, trained staff, effective communication, appropriate interventions, and a willingness to make changes when our current approaches are not producing the results our students need.

It also requires us to recognize that supporting a student does not mean allowing unsafe behavior to continue without an

appropriate response. Compassion, understanding and accountability must work together.

Since I was alerted to the seriousness of these concerns, our team has made this situation a priority. We have taken several steps to strengthen our response and provide additional support at East Pike.

I want to outline those steps for the Board and the community.

We have realigned resources to increase emotional support services so we can provide proactive behavioral interventions. This will allow us to provide a full continuum of support for students within our schools.

The purpose of this classroom is to give students with significant behavioral and

emotional needs additional support to maintain a productive and appropriate learning environment for all.

This approach allows us to identify key instructional periods when additional intervention may be necessary and, when appropriate, provide students with support outside their general education classrooms during those times. The goal is to intervene proactively rather than wait until a situation escalates into a crisis.

This is about recognizing that some students need a different level of support at particular times and ensuring that we have a structured way to provide that support. We have a legal obligation to provide the least restrictive environment possible for all students, but must also balance that with our obligation to provide a safe environment for all students.

The emotional support classroom is intended to provide for both of those obligations.

We have also realigned our resources to increase support for behavioral responses.

We recognize that staff members need more than expectations; they need the people, training, and resources necessary to respond effectively when challenging behaviors occur. We have increased support for staff in responding to behavioral incidents and are working to ensure that our response is coordinated, consistent, and focused on student and staff safety.

Tonight, You will be asked to approve even more support personnel to help ensure that when behaviors occur, there are adequate resources available for response.

We have increased the presence of the central administration team to observe and assist in the situation.

I believe that effective leadership requires us to see and understand challenges firsthand. We cannot make sound decisions based solely on reports, assumptions, or what we believe should be happening.

I have directed the central administration team to observe the situation at East Pike carefully, assess how our current systems are functioning, and identify areas where adjustments may be necessary.

These observations help us examine whether our procedures are working as intended, whether staff have adequate support, and whether our existing interventions are producing the results we need.

We must be willing to look critically at our own practices. If a system is not working effectively, our responsibility is to improve it.

We also established a reporting process to help identify systemic issues that might be occurring.

We are working with building administration to improve how behavioral concerns are reported, acted upon, reviewed, and analyzed so that we can ensure a timely and appropriate response and identify recurring problems to determine whether changes to scheduling, staffing, procedures, interventions, or communication are needed.

We have engaged the TaC Team at ARIN Intermediate Unit to make additional training, coaching, and support available to our staff.

The IU team will work with the Pennsylvania Technical Training and Assistance Network for additional support if they feel that the needs rise to that level.

We recognize that our staff members are experts, but also that everyone can benefit from a fresh set of eyes or ideas. Continued professional development to provide practical strategies for responding to behaviors that can escalate quickly and potentially become dangerous, is something we can all benefit from as this pattern of increased explosive behaviors is emerging across the nation.

As an administration, we want our teachers and support staff to feel as prepared as possible to help make our classrooms more stable and productive learning environments.

To ensure that safety plans and behavioral management plans are being implemented consistently and effectively, we established additional team meetings focused specifically on individual student behavior.

We have strengthened opportunities for the people involved in supporting students to meet, share information appropriately, clarify responsibilities, and coordinate their responses.

When communication breaks down, interventions can become inconsistent. Staff members may have different understandings of expectations, strategies may not be implemented consistently, and concerns may not reach the people who need to address them.

These meetings are intended to reduce those gaps, improve collaboration, and ensure that the adults supporting our students are working from a shared understanding of the plan.

Our goal is to create a more coordinated approach in which concerns are communicated promptly, responsibilities are clear, and the effectiveness of our interventions is regularly reviewed.

We have also clarified disciplinary expectations and are working to make better use of disciplinary consequences to make progress in student behavior management.

We have reinforced expectations regarding serious and unsafe behavior and have increased the use of suspensions and out-of-district placements where appropriate.

Let me be clear: disciplinary decisions must be made on an individual basis, consistent with district policy and applicable law, including the procedural protections that apply to students with disabilities.

However, the presence of a disability or a significant behavioral need does not eliminate our responsibility to address safety concerns. We must respond appropriately to serious incidents, protect other students and staff, and determine whether existing interventions and placements are meeting the needs of the student involved.

Since these concerns were brought to my attention, we have increased disciplinary protocols while remaining compliant with state and federal regulations. Let me be clear again, this is not something that I am proud

of. We do not ever want to be in a situation where we have to exclude students from school. But I felt it was important to include here given the narrative being shared by some that the district is doing nothing in response.

We have also been responsive to the questions and concerns of our parents. Since this was brought to my attention, my team and I have had numerous meetings with parents, and a common concern was why we were not being more transparent about what was happening in the classrooms. The simple answer was that Federal and State law forbids us from sharing any information about specific students with anyone other than their own parents or guardians. We simply did not have a clear process for informing other parents of serious situations without violating those laws. But we also recognized how

frustrating it is as a parent to try and support their own children who may have been exposed to an extreme, possibly traumatizing event with no information from their school.

We worked with our solicitor to change our administrative regulations to establish a reporting protocol. This new procedure will report any significant event that takes place in a classroom that could be upsetting to children or that causes instruction in the classroom to cease for any significant amount of time to be reported to all parents in the classroom.

This procedure will share critical information with parents while protecting the confidentiality of the students involved.

This was done because of the advocacy of the parents and community, in an effort to

work together to be responsive to their needs, and to help all students.

We are also establishing a process for sharing disciplinary data with the Board committee on Academics to be more transparent and clear with the community. Again, this data will be general and not specific to any individual student, intended to reflect the effectiveness of the system rather than outing any individual classroom or student.

This step is also being implemented as a direct result of parent advocacy and concerns. We understand that we work to serve the community, and when a reasonable request is made, we are happy to be responsive.

I understand that families want to know whether the steps we are taking will make a difference. That is a fair question, and one we must answer through our actions and results. The ask from our parents has been that we come alongside them to help ensure that all students have the safest and most effective educational experience possible. I am not giving this report to declare success, but only to show that we are working to that end.

We cannot measure success simply by whether we have held meetings, provided training, established a classroom, or changed a procedure.

Those steps matter, but they are means to the desired goal.

Ultimately, we must ask whether students are safer, whether teachers feel better supported,

whether serious incidents and classroom disruptions are decreasing, whether instructional time is being protected, and whether students with significant behavioral needs are making progress.

We need to examine the evidence, communicate appropriately about our progress, and make further adjustments if and when necessary.

That is our response and our commitment.

It will take time, and we ask that the community continue to support all of our students, staff, and administrators as we progress toward our shared goals.