

On Sunday our school district lost a smart and caring leader, our community lost a friend, and a family lost their devoted husband, father, and grandfather. Dan Marburger gave the ultimate sacrifice trying to protect our students. His heroism is not surprising. Many of us have known Dan for decades and he was always the first to step up and help. We are forever grateful, and we cannot begin to imagine the pain and anguish Elizabeth and her family are enduring. I am grateful for Dan's friendship, his leadership, and his love for this school district.

As we mourn Dan's passing and continue to grieve the loss of Ahmir Jolliff, and support the victims as they recuperate, we are aware of the importance of bringing our school community back together. In times like this we need one another, and we need to be in community.

Our plan and timetable to return to the classroom is being revised so students, faculty and staff can take time to grieve the loss of Dan. We are trying to balance the need to return to school with the need to provide time to grieve and begin to heal. Our staff worked with him every day and he was both a friend and a mentor.

In addition to the return to classroom plan and schedule, I recognize that many of you want to know what new safety precautions will be implemented. I want you to know that we are taking a measured approach in evaluating all options. The District is seeking out the special expertise of law enforcement and will be seeking out the advice of other safety experts to assist in our return. As announced previously, we will have uniformed officers onsite to ensure a smooth transition back once that date is finalized. We appreciate your patience as we put in the time and thought necessary to carefully study this issue.

Our entire school community was deeply affected on January 4. I, like many of you, find myself asking "why" and trying to understand this act of violence. I don't think we will ever know and, in our fear, and anguish, not having an answer feels unacceptable.

I do know that we have students who need and want to be together. Some extracurricular activities will resume on Tuesday. For some it may be too soon, and for others it is not soon enough. I want you to know that we are trying to balance what is best for our entire school community and we want everyone to move forward when it is right for them.

I want to remind you we are having a special School Board meeting today at 3:00 p.m. at Towncraft (2nd floor, 1122 Willis Ave, Perry) so members can review our school reopening plan, contracts for additional staff and other resources. We changed the meeting to today from Sunday because of Dan's passing. Many of us simply needed time after learning of his death. We also wanted to move to a larger venue to accommodate those who wish to attend. I recognize Monday at 3:00 p.m. may not be the most convenient time but we had to adjust due to the Iowa Caucuses and the Perry City Council meeting. You can join virtually:

Meeting link: meet.google.com/mcz-huhf-now

Join by phone: (US) [+1 484-262-9697](tel:+14842629697) PIN: 985568534

In situations like this, I recognize that there is a real need and desire for updated information. We are posting Bluejay Strong Updates on our website and sending them to parents via School Messenger. We are using our school Facebook pages to communicate. As a district we can only communicate information that is factual and accurate based on our current understanding, and within our purview. For example, we cannot share information on what happened on January 4 because there is still an ongoing criminal investigation, nor do we have permission from law enforcement to share the names of our students and staff who are recovering from their injuries. My hope is that I can provide the names and updates of our students and staff who are recovering soon, so we can openly let them and their families know we are all thinking about them.

In closing, please know that the Perry administrative team, the board and I care deeply about this community and all our school families. As we walk this path together, I ask for your patience and grace. We are forever changed and we need one another more than ever before.

We are Bluejay Strong.
Superintendent Clark Wicks