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## **CAMDEN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Melvin L. Hawkins, *Superintendent*

March 2, 2016

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I know the past two weeks have been full of frustration and emotion for students, families and staff of the Camden County Schools. I can assure everyone that Camden County Schools places the highest priority on ensuring the safety of the entire school community. We have been in regular communication with local law enforcement to do all that is possible with all available local, state and federal resources to create a safe learning environment. With that, we can all agree there can be no guarantee that the malicious actions of those outside of our school or community will not continue in the future.

Camden County Schools has been proactive in a number of actions in terms of student and staff safety. Before it was required in legislation this year, Camden County Schools conducted intruder drills on an unannounced basis. Prior to recent events, these drills were conducted and follow-up reviews with each school and local law enforcement. Panic buttons have been installed at each school to give an immediate call to 911 if necessary. Surveillance equipment has been upgraded and additional cameras added throughout the district over the past couple of years. These systems continue to be reviewed and enhanced in the name of safety.

In terms of law enforcement, there is a full time School Resource Officer who is a Sheriff's deputy located on the high school campus daily. The Sheriff's Department also has uniformed officers that enter and walk the school halls daily and often times multiple times a day. To go beyond that, deputies also check the schools while most of us are sleeping.

Events such as these cause school personnel, parents, local law enforcement and students to be more aware of their surroundings. It also brings out suggestions for greater improvements for student and staff safety. While it may be impossible to implement every suggestion, it is always worth noting the suggestions offered. I encourage you to share your thoughts and suggestions for your child's school.

In closing, I want to thank you for your patience and understanding during this stressful and frustrating time. I hope to very soon send notice that the person or persons responsible for making these calls has been apprehended. In the meantime, subpoenas have been issued and law enforcement is committed to continuing their presence on our school campuses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melvin L. Hawkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Melvin L. Hawkins

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Camden County Public Schools, in partnership with home and community, will educate all to be productive citizens in an ever-changing global society.*