

Atchison Co school leaders address TX shooting, local safety

(KAIR)--The leaders of Atchison County's two public school districts are speaking out following the school shooting in Texas, offering their condolences while addressing the safety in the local classrooms.

Dr. Andrew Gaddis is the Superintendent for the Atchison County Schools of USD 377.

Following an inquiry made by MSC News, Gaddis, in an emailed response, said "unfortunately, horrific events like what occurred this week are becoming more common," adding that "the safety of [the district's] students, staff and all other individuals in [the district] buildings has been and will continue to be a top priority" for USD 377.

Gaddis explains that "over the past few years, USD 377 has taken steps to make [school district] buildings even more safe and secure," adding that "in the Spring of 2020, [the district] replaced all exterior doors at the Jr-Sr High School and added door card readers and cameras to both the elementary and Jr-Sr High building."

Gaddis also credits the Atchison County Sheriff's Office which provides "a full time School Resource officer in [district] buildings everyday," adding, too, that "school staff is trained on how to react if there is an instance of a school intruder."

Gaddis also told MSC News the school district is "currently seeking grant opportunities to add even more cameras, provide additional training opportunities and enhance communication with law enforcement in the event of an emergency."

Dr. Renee Nugent, Superintendent for the Atchison Public Schools of USD 409, also provided answers to our inquiry regarding school safety, saying that "the horrific tragedy this week in Texas is a stark reminder that we have to remain diligent in being proactive around the issues of school safety, including mental health and wellness in our schools as well as physical structural safety measures.

Saying that her "heart goes out to the staff and students in Texas, Nugent told MSC News the school district, this week, "received information about safe and secure school grant opportunities," saying the district plans "to apply for grant monies to add technology that will allow [schools] to screen visitors and volunteers as well as monitor all staff and students entering and exiting the building daily." Nugent added that the district plans "to implement a district-wide radio communication system that will positively affect the timeliness of response to any crisis intervention."

Nugent also noted appreciation for the school district’s school resource officer as well as “all of the support services [the district is] currently able to offer within [the] schools.”

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