

July 8, 2020

RE: Endorsement of the Crimestoppers Safe School APP

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a newly retired Senior Supervisor of Administration for the St. Tammany Parish School Board. I have worked closely with the Crimestoppers hotline and the Crimestoppers Safe School APP for over 10 years to help protect the students of the St. Tammany Parish School System. The Crimestoppers Hotline and the Crimestoppers Safe School APP have provided thousands of tips over the years, giving our school system an opportunity to investigate and intervene in everything from bullying to social media threats. The ability of our students to call or submit a tip to Crimestoppers anonymously has created a safe means for students to alert school administration of incidents without fear of retaliation.

The St. Tammany Parish School System's partnership with Crimestoppers has made our schools and our community much safer. Crimestoppers has been diligent in providing our eight high schools and thirteen junior high schools with annual presentations. The presentations have created a culture for our students to contact Crimestoppers via the APP when they hear something or see something that could cause harm to them, a friend, a classmate or to their school. The annual presentations give our students an outstanding explanation of how to use the APP, as well as when to use the APP. The presentations are very educational and informative, as evidenced by an increase in the number of student tips sent to the APP after a school presentation.

The Safe School App allows students to submit in a tip as soon as they see it, which gives schools an opportunity to investigate in real time. The APP also provides an opportunity for students to text tips after school hours.

The APP provides the school district an opportunity to investigate and use protocols to maintain the safety of our students during school and after school hours. Many times students will post threats on social media after school hours involving group fights, weapons, suicide, and school shootings. These tips are considered emergency tips.

Anytime there is an emergency tip, the Crimestoppers call center will call one of three central office administrators to alert them of the possible threat. The central office administrator will notify the principal of the school, as well as law enforcement if necessary. If the emergency tip concerns a threat made towards a student or a school after school hours and involves a weapon, then law enforcement is called. If an emergency tip concerns a threat of suicide, then the central office administrator will notify the principal of the school the student attends. The principal calls the parents of the student to alert them of the possible threat. If the principal cannot get in touch with the parents of the student, then law enforcement is called to do a welfare check on the student. These protocols are in place twenty-four hours a day seven days

a week. Without the APP, the school system would not know of any possible threats involving weapons or suicide.

You cannot always measure what the APP has prevented over the last ten years, but there are times you can. Like this past Christmas holiday when we had two students who posted that they wanted to harm themselves on social media. A tip to the APP alerted a central office administrator about the students and we were able to contact the parents. The students were able to get the help they needed and tragedy was avoided. When the students went back to school, a safety plan was put in place to assure that they received the counseling they needed. All of this was made possible through the Crimestoppers Safe School APP and the culture that Crimestoppers has created for the students of St. Tammany to report anonymously.

The hard work and dedication provided by Darlene Cusanza and her Crimestoppers team has been second to none in providing the Crimestoppers Safe School APP to the St. Tammany Parish School System. It has been an extremely valuable tool in maintaining a safe learning environment for all of the students of the St. Tammany Parish School System.

Please don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Kevin Darouse

Kevin R. Darouse
Senior Supervisor of Administration (*Retired*)
St. Tammany Parish School System
Covington, Louisiana