



**Downey Unified**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT



**Downey Police Department**

## PRESS RELEASE

**Downey, CA, March 21, 2018:**

Dear Downey Families and Community Members,

The Downey Unified School District (DUSD) and the Downey Police Department (DPD) have enjoyed a long, positive, and collaborative partnership over the past several decades and keeping our schools safe continue to be our priority. The two of us, DUSD Superintendent Dr. John Garcia and DPD Police Chief Carl Charles, are writing this letter together to let our entire community know that we are focused on the safety of our community, that we meet regularly, and in the wake of the recent school tragedy in Florida, that we have had several opportunities to talk in depth about our current practices and procedures and about the work that we can do together to ensure that we are as prepared as possible for any circumstance. Through this open dialogue, we have identified a number of preventative measures to implement immediately, and other security measures that will require additional research and/or funding. Our continued commitment to the safety of children in our schools includes a number of ongoing initiatives:

- The School District funds DPD officers who are assigned to our high schools through the Police Department's School Resource Officer Program.
- Emergency response time by patrol officers is within **two minutes** of a 911 call.
- Downey Police respond to and investigate **all** school safety threats, including those on social media.
- Patrol officers conduct security checks throughout their respective shifts and maintain an active relationship with school staff, students, and parents.
- Traffic officers monitor pedestrian and vehicle traffic during school hours.
- All visitors to campus are required to check in through each school's front office.
- Every campus conducts regular drills to prepare for the possibility of a variety of emergency situations, including earthquake, fire, and an active shooter either on campus or in the vicinity of our schools.
- Each school reviews and updates its safety plan on an annual basis.
- Crossing guards monitor major traffic intersections in the mornings and afternoons, interacting with pedestrians who are approaching campuses.
- All emergency systems at school sites are routinely tested.

- Police, city officials, and school administrators meet regularly to discuss opportunities to improve school safety and security measures.
- DPD Patrol supervisors regularly conduct briefing training with officers to address emergency responses to our schools.

Our schools were not designed during a time when controlled campus access was as important as it is today. However, we are now experiencing a paradigm shift that requires us to address school safety in many different ways, including school infrastructure, internal and external communication and emergency planning. We are in the process of planning or implementing the following measures:

- Downey Police Department will conduct active shooter training at a DUSD campus within the next month. This training will be in addition to the lockdown drills already in place in our schools.
- DPD and DUSD are jointly conducting perimeter safety assessments at schools.
- DPD and DUSD are consistently assessing our communication protocols.
- DPD and DUSD provide informational updates to the DUSD School Board and the Downey City Council.

What can parents, families, and Downey citizens do to help?

- Stay connected with your children and monitor their social media activities.
- Reach out to school administrators, the police department, or other trained professionals if you see behavior that has potential for causing self-harm or harm to others.
- Ensure that if you own a firearm, it is locked up – it's the law!
- Cooperate with changes to campus entry and egress plans or any other safety measures that are put in place, and know that while they may cause inconvenience they will contribute to a safer environment for our students.
- Take a moment to make sure that children understand that any school threat, regardless of the intention, may result in serious criminal and civil charges, and life-long consequences.
- ***If you see something, say something!*** Please report safety concerns to your school or to the Downey Police Department. For your convenience, the police department's business line is (562) 861-0771.

Safety is everyone's responsibility. By working together and communicating openly – and especially by talking with and listening to our students – we will continue to keep our schools safe.

Thank you,

Dr. John Garcia  
DUSD Superintendent of Schools

Carl D. Charles  
DPD Chief of Police

