

September 26, 2019

Dear Leyden Community,

I would like to take some time and communicate as much information as possible with you about the past few days here at Leyden. I am writing this message in conjunction with Mike Witz, the Director of Police in Franklin Park. What I will include in this letter is public and can be shared.

Tuesday's Altercation

At approximately 9:30 am on Tuesday morning, one student was stabbed by another student in our hallway during a passing period. We now know that the incident can be traced back to an argument that started in class. Several days later, the issue apparently continued to intensify and culminated in this confrontation. The Franklin Park Police Department's investigation determined that the origins of this situation were not gang related.

The entire confrontation lasted approximately ten seconds. Following the fight, the injured student received medical care from our school resource officer, dean and Leyden security staff within five seconds. That student was in the nurse's office within thirty seconds before being taken to the hospital. Those staff members and first responders should be credited with saving that student's life through their quick actions.

When the building was placed on lockdown, the student who committed the stabbing was caught by a Leyden security guard and dean in approximately three minutes. The Franklin Park Police Department promptly arrived on the scene and placed that student in custody. He is being charged with attempted murder and remains in custody. The lockdown remained in place until approximately 11:30 am so that police officers were able to check every area of the building and assess the lack of additional threats.

Social Media

Throughout the day on Wednesday, we became aware of a number of social media posts. We appreciate all of the students, parents, community members and staff members who came forward to share that information with us. In reviewing those messages, it was clear that there were multiple gang references in the content. Some of the messages were linked to former Leyden students, while others came from current students or were simply anonymous. Overnight, we received over one hundred tips from students on our anonymous tip line.

From the timing of our messages, you can see that administrators and local police officers have been up all night working through all of this information. As we reviewed that information, we need to keep in mind that Leyden students live in seven different communities. So each time we came to a student's name, we needed to coordinate with a different local police department which adds time to the process.

The need to coordinate with multiple entities in order to fully investigate each concern is what led us to call the E-Learning Day this morning. We needed to provide our local law enforcement agencies some time and space to investigate the various aspects and social media posts. At 11:00 am today, we held a joint meeting at East Leyden High School with representatives from the following agencies and municipalities:

Cook County Sheriff's Police Department
Franklin Park Police Department
Melrose Park Police Department
Northlake Police Department
River Grove Police Department
Rosemont Police Department
Schiller Park Police Department
Leyden Township
Village of Franklin Park
City of Northlake
Village of River Grove
Village of Rosemont
Village of Schiller Park

At that meeting, we were able to share information, update one another, and discuss plans for moving forward.

I can report to you that collectively, we have identified and spoken with over forty students/families responsible for the social media posts over the past 24 hours. Local police and school officials are collaboratively working with students and families to address those issues. Again, I cannot comment on the specific outcomes, but I can say that those issues have been addressed. Those processes have yielded the conclusions that there is no credible threat from those posts.

Moving Forward

Tomorrow, school will open on a regular schedule. Our counselors and social workers continue to be available in Room 217 at East Leyden. And just like any other day, counselors and social workers are available at West Leyden as well in case any students there need to discuss any of this week's events.

As a precaution, we will have an increased police presence both inside and outside both Leyden High Schools. That partnership is merely preventative as we look to move forward from the earlier events of this week.

We will continue to monitor social media, and just as you have done this week, please reach out to the building administration with any concerns or information to share. Through this process, we learned that some students were aware that the fight on Tuesday was going to happen, but

they did not report it. Hopefully moving forward, we can subscribe to the “See Something (or Hear Something), Say Something” approach to report possible issues.

Thank You

Once again, thank you to our students, our faculty and staff, our first responders, our communities, and all of our local law enforcement agencies. This was a truly collaborative effort on behalf of the entire Leyden community. We all look forward to having students and staff back in the building.

With #leydenpride,

Nick Polyak
Superintendent
Leyden High School District 212

Mike Witz
Director of Police
Franklin Park Police Department