ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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April 11, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We have been informed by the Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church that some of its members plan to demonstrate outside the area of Meade High School and Meade Middle School on the morning of Thursday, April 14, 2011. To be clear, this event is neither sanctioned nor sponsored by our school system.

However, the church has a constitutionally-protected right to free speech, and there is nothing unlawful about the demonstration itself. Likewise, we have an obligation to inform parents and take steps we believe are necessary to help ensure the safety of students and staff members at our schools. We are working closely with the Anne Arundel County and Fort Meade police departments to accomplish that goal.

Demonstrators will not be allowed on school or Fort Meade property, and will be kept in a designated area. Any counter-protestors will be kept in a separate designated area. Parents will receive a Connect-ED telephone message on Wednesday, April 13, to provide any other pertinent information that needs to be communicated.

I want to emphasize that the vast majority of Westboro's demonstrations have been lawful and peaceful. We are putting these precautions in place to help minimize the chance for any interaction that may lead to trouble. The Anne Arundel County and Fort Meade police departments have been terrific partners in this endeavor, as they have been in many others. Together, we have crafted a plan that we believe will allow this lawful demonstration to take place and allow our students and staff members to arrive at school safely.

Finally, I would encourage you to talk with your children openly about this event and to discuss the freedoms that allow it to take place. I would also encourage you to discuss the need to respect the views of others, even if you disagree with those views.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Maxwell, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

KMM/bm