



October 21, 2019

Dear Arundel High Families:

There have been many online comments over the last few days regarding an incident at our Homecoming dance on September 28, 2019, and our school's actions in the wake of that incident.

I want to be very clear that our school administration followed all appropriate protocols and, along with police, conducted a thorough investigation both during the dance and afterward. The decision against sending a letter home with students was not based in any way on the credibility of the victim. We have absolutely no reason to doubt the statement she provided. Rather, that decision – made in consultation with school system officials – was based on the sensitive nature of the case, a desire to protect and continue to support the victim, and the scarcity of information about a suspect.

I also want to be clear that the conduct reported by the victim is something that is unacceptable in any situation. It is not something we tolerate at Arundel High School and it should not be tolerated by anyone in any setting. Anyone who is the victim of such an act, or who sees such an act, should report it to the proper officials immediately so that it can be addressed swiftly and appropriately.

As our Homecoming dance was under way, administrators were told about a student who was upset. Those administrators located the student, who told them she had been grabbed inappropriately while on the dance floor.

School staff immediately alerted county police officers who were on hand for the event and began interviewing the victim and those who were around her at the time the incident occurred. None of those interviewed could identify the suspect; they could only provide a description that contained a skin tone, a shirt color, and the fact that the suspect was wearing glasses and had dark hair. School staff continued their investigation throughout the remainder of the dance, interviewing anyone whose identity became known to them and searching for anyone who matched the description provided. Police were a part of that investigation.

A school administrator also spoke with a parent of the victim, who arrived at the school. School administrators also spoke with the victim several times throughout the remainder of the dance.

At no time was anyone interviewed able to provide a name of a suspect or any description beyond the initial one provided to administrators. Additionally, at no time did any other student tell any administrator that he or she had been the victim of a similar act.

School administrators interviewed the victim and those who were around her at the dance again on Tuesday, October 1, when school reopened after being closed on Rosh Hashanah. Video footage from the dance was also reviewed. School administration spoke to the victim's mother again on that day. Police also independently interviewed the victim and several others.

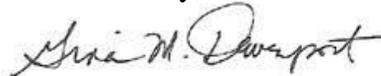
Our school administration continued to communicate with the family of the victim throughout the week following the dance. On Thursday, October 3, the parents of the victim were invited to come to the school to review all the information collected and view the video footage.

The recent online posts have also prompted concerns from students. This morning, at their request, I met with several of our student leaders to discuss what I could tell them about the incident at the dance and our handling of it. I listened to their concerns and promised – as I always have done with students – to remain available to speak with them should they have concerns moving forward. I assured them that while I can't guarantee that everyone will be satisfied with every decision, I can guarantee that there is never a time – ever – where a decision we make comes about without the wellbeing of students in the forefront of our minds.

Any student who feels unsafe at any time should report the situation to a responsible adult. Any safety concern can also be addressed through the Student Safety Hotline at 877-676-9854 that can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Additionally, our school counselors are also available to assist anyone who has been victimized.

We have not received any further information regarding the incident at the dance from either the victim or anyone who was in the area of the incident since our interviews of those people. If you have information to share, please contact our school or police.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gina M. Davenport".

Gina Davenport
Principal

GD/bm