



Dear Montessori families,

Along with the rest of the nation and most specifically educators and families across the country, we are shaken and disheartened at the recent events in a Florida High School last week. This horrific incident has prompted us to once again review the policies, procedures and systems we have in our own school to ensure that we are doing all we can to protect and secure our students and staff.

First and foremost we want to inform you of the steps we have taken to secure our school over the past several years.

- Each campus has a **single point of entry** for visitors and families that is locked and is only accessed by being “buzzed in” by an employee after being observed on the security camera. We have taken additional steps to ensure that all reception personnel do not allow anyone to breach the classroom hallways.
- The reception area has a security door denying access to the classroom areas.
- Each room in the building is equipped with a **deadbolt** on the door so that rooms can be locked from the inside.
- There are a series of security cameras throughout (in and out) each building. Those security cameras are viewed continuously at each reception desk. We have the ability to view them on remote technology which can be provided to local authorities in an emergency situation.
- Each classroom has a safe zone established for a lock down situation.
- We have had a security specialist tour the buildings and have taken their recommendations on how to continue to strengthen safety procedures.
- Our teachers have attended two trainings over the past two years in which we have simulated lock down situations.

This week we will be conducting **lock down drills** with all of our students. Our students are already very familiar with the skills necessary in emergency

situations – they know that they must remain quiet, listen to their teachers, stay together and follow instructions during our monthly emergency evacuation drills.

This week's drills will employ those same skills – except instead of leaving the building, they will lock down in their respective classroom. We will do these drills on a monthly basis.

Your child may come home this week talking about practicing this skill and describing the drills. We encourage you to talk to your child about this on an age appropriate level. We have attached a brief article with helpful advice on how you might approach this. In addition, we have added some links to our website.

Regarding the drills, please encourage your child to follow their teacher's instructions and assure them that the teachers and the staff will take care of them. We want them to feel safe and protected at school. If you communicate confidence, your child will feel secure.

We want to thank all of our families for their patience and understanding in following the systems we have designed to keep our students safe including limited access to the facility and our rules regarding the identification needed to dismiss students in carpool. We know that sometimes these can feel restrictive; however they are in place for everyone's protection.

We want you to know that the safety of your children – our students - is always at the top of our minds and we will continue to take every necessary step to keep our environment safe.

Thank you for your continued support of Montessori Regional Charter School. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to send them to [chiefofficers@mrcserie.org](mailto:chiefofficers@mrcserie.org).

Sincerely,

Mark Zielinski, Chief Academic Officer

Jane Binder, Chief Operating Officer

## How to talk to children about shootings: An age-by-age guide

There's no one way to address tragedies with children, and how parents approach it depends both on the child's age and temperament. The American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend avoiding the topic with children until they reach a certain age – around 8, but again, it depends on the child.

“If it doesn't directly affect your family, kids under 8 do not need to hear about this,” says Dr. [Deborah Gilboa](#), a parenting expert. Before this age, children struggle to process it.

But parents should talk to their younger children about mass shootings if they are at risk of hearing it from others, she says.

While advice varies by age, Gilboa provides a general recommendation for all parents faced with telling their children about the latest mass shooting.

### **Preschool-kindergarten: One-sentence story**

“You have to figure out before you talk to them what story you want them to tell themselves,” she says.

With young children, Gilboa recommends that parents keep their stories simple. These stories should reinforce parents' beliefs. Perhaps, parents want their children to know that a bad man hurt people. Maybe parents want their children to know that someone with a serious illness felt angry and hurt people.

“You are going to give a one-sentence story to anyone under 6,” she says.

This might be a chance to change the conversation, too. Try to focus on the positives, such as the heroes of the story.

### **Elementary school children: Shield them**

Again, parents need to decide on the takeaway message. Children in this age group will ask many more interrogative questions and parents need to decide how much they want to share.

Gilboa stresses that parents should prevent their children from seeing pictures or the news because the images will stick with children longer than words. If children do see

pictures, she recommends that parents show their children positive photos to counteract the negative.

“Let’s see if we can replace those memories and balance it out by showing the positives and the amazing people who rushed to help,” she says.

## **Tweens: Listen to their feelings**

Start the conversation by asking tweens if they heard about the latest shooting.

“If you are going to talk [about] a fraught or laden topic ... you start with a pretest. You are going to ask how they feel about it,” Gilboa says.

If they have heard of it, listen to their feelings. If they haven’t heard of it, parents have an opportunity to share their beliefs while gaining better insight into their tweens.

“[This becomes] a great conversation of their values and your values that do not focus on the particular gore [but] more on the person you are raising,” she says.

## **Teens: Look for solutions**

Again, Gilboa says parents should ask their teens if they have heard of the latest tragedy and allow them to share their feelings.

But teenagers will expect more.

“Teenagers are looking for hypocrisy and solutions and this generation believes in collaboration and social justice. And they are going to ask ‘What are you doing,’” she says. “You can answer and then ask ‘what are you doing? What would you like to do? What can we do together?’”

Teaching teenagers to work toward change will help them be resilient, she says. She stresses that parents still need to listen to their teens’ feelings and display empathy.

“I think for anyone action makes us feel effective,” Gilboa says. “What we want our kids to do when [they] see something wrong is to try to fix it.”