



# JAMES BOWIE HIGH SCHOOL

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October 12, 2023

Greetings, Bulldog Nation!

**REFLECTIONS ON CAMPUS SAFETY** - There is no greater burden shouldered by campus leaders than that of keeping students safe. Threats or rumors of threats against Bowie High School have been circulated on social media since the beginning of the school year. With the tragic school shooting in Uvalde in the spring, and unfortunately, with similar events continuing to be reported across the nation, I recognize that some in our community are feeling particularly anxious or on extra high-alert when it comes to the safety and security of students. I want to take this opportunity to offer some information and reassurance, so you are positioned to have fruitful discussions with your child about their day-to-day safety.

While the design of the campus does not allow for an impenetrable perimeter, there have been a number of changes taken over the last few years to inhibit access to the campus. Some of the changes include: reduction in the number of entry points, locking of exterior doors, installation of one-way film on exterior doors, installation of security cameras and a call box at the single point of entry, a duty schedule for staff, improvements in fencing, and requiring identification badges for anyone on campus. Visitors must present ID and complete a Raptor background check in the main office before entering the campus. Teachers are also asked to keep their interior classroom door locked so that classrooms are secure in the event of an emergency. While there has been some resistance among students to wear their lanyards and badges, doing so is what enables students and staff to identify someone who is not authorized to be on campus. This system has proven helpful since we instituted the policy in the 18-19 school year.

Our campus administrators and counselors routinely work in close collaboration, day-in and day-out, along with district leadership and the Austin ISD Police Department, in assessing and responding to the possibility of violent activity or other potentially serious situations. These professionals are highly trained and knowledgeable about best practices. I feel that it is important to convey to you that it is not standard practice to notify parents and guardians of each and every concern reported, particularly if those concerns are based on rumors proven to be untrue or of no threat to the wider student population. To do so would potentially hinder investigations, unnecessarily contribute to angst and disrupt learning, and particularly if there is social media involved, possibly fuel the efforts of those who are making false claims. There can also be issues of confidentiality that would make sharing information inappropriate. If your child is ever in danger, our approach is to first prioritize securing your child's safety and then communicate information to you. Your trust in this process is what enables us to keep our resources focused on the students and the issues at hand.

Responding to heightened anxieties has become a top priority for our leadership teams this year. Our staff continues to participate in professional development to help equip students in the development of strategies to better self-regulate, relate to others in a positive way, and to reason their way through challenges. Our



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“Regulate, Relate, and Reason” strategies have been incorporated into classroom practices and explicitly taught to students in a series of social and emotional learning lessons with annual refreshers. Additionally, because student conflicts on our campus frequently involve some component of social media misuse, we have revised and updated our digital citizenship lessons. Our students engaged in these lessons after PSAT on Wednesday this week. These efforts are grounded in neuroscience and the understanding that when our students are mentally healthy, they are more likely to succeed emotionally, socially, and academically.

To assume responsibility for your child’s well-being is both an honor and a heavy responsibility. While I cannot offer you unconditional guarantees regarding your child’s safety, I can offer my sincerest commitment to making Bowie safe. I am grateful for your support in this work and for my staff, who continue to be vigilant in safeguarding our students. I have been in conversation with many of you in recent days about these issues, and I always welcome your feedback.

**DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP LESSON** - As I mentioned above, this Wednesday, all grade levels engaged in a Digital Citizenship lesson. 9th - 11th grade students did so after they completed the PSAT (which was a success!), and 12th grade students did so with their assigned teacher during their scheduled enrichment activities. This lesson engaged students in conversation regarding the potential dangers of social media, including oversharing personal information and exploitation of “influencers” as well as how it can be used as a tool for good, like uplifting marginalized voices and preserving our history. Materials were adapted from [The New York Times’s Learning Network](#). Staff will have future opportunities to converse further with their students about these important topics.

**REMINDER ON CHECKOUT PROCEDURES** - When picking up your child, park and proceed to the main office with your identification. The office staff will then retrieve your child from class. **To authorize your child to drive themselves off campus, you must submit the [Driving Pass Request Form](#) 24 hours in advance.** The form is open from 4:30 PM and closes the following morning at 7:30 AM daily, and requires the authorized parent or guardian to upload an image of their identification. Please do not plan to pick up your child from school after 4:00 PM to alleviate congestion and confusion at the end of the school day.

**SCHOOL BUS AND TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYEES APPRECIATION WEEK** - From October 16-20, school districts throughout the country will observe [School Bus Safety Week](#) to promote school bus safety in order for parents, students, motorists, all district employees, and other interested parties to join forces and address the importance of school bus safety. During this week, Austin ISD also celebrates and appreciates all our transportation employees for their dedication and hard work by providing refreshments, district benefits info sessions, and announcements at our bus terminals.

Please join me in extending our appreciation to our transportation team!

Go Dawgs!

Mark Robinson  
Principal