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Dear Columbia High School Students, Families, and Staff,

The safety and security of our students and staff in the South Orange/Maplewood School District is a top priority. I am writing to share additional information regarding the events of today that occurred at Columbia High School.

Today, at approximately 10:00 a.m., information was received by our administrators regarding non-Columbia students planning to enter the CHS building. In collaboration with the Maplewood Police Department, the administration followed emergency protocols and enacted the first Code Yellow: Shelter in Place. The Maplewood Police immediately responded to the high school during this time, swept the building, reviewed video footage, and did not locate any unauthorized intruder. In addition, teachers verified all students in their classes as an additional precaution. During this time, the teachers continued instruction as is the protocol during a shelter in place and no visitors were permitted in the building. Once the Maplewood Police Department determined it was secure, the Shelter in Place was lifted.

Unfortunately, this afternoon, the school received additional information that there may be non-Columbia students in the building and additional students may be coming to Columbia High School after school. It was also rumored that a weapon may have been on campus. In collaboration with the Maplewood Police Department and, out of an abundance of caution, the school enacted emergency protocols and the second Code Yellow was called. The police again swept the building and determined it was safe to dismiss students. The police remained on campus through the afternoon as students were dismissed. At no time were any weapons found.

I want to thank all of the administrators, teachers, staff members, and students who all cooperated in our efforts. I also want to thank the Maplewood Police Department (MPD) for their assistance and responsiveness to today's events.

Additionally, on Monday, the Columbia High School administration and staff will be reviewing the safety guidelines below with students. I recognize that today's events may have brought anxiety to our students and staff. Counselors will be available to students throughout the day on Monday. Additionally, our social work intern program continues to run throughout the year, and is a service available to our students.

In order to continue to maintain the safety and security of our students and staff, I am asking everyone to follow the following safety guidelines:

1. All students must wear or carry their identification badges at ALL times in the building.
2. Students may never prop open doors of the building.
3. All students must follow teachers' instructions during an emergency.
4. In the morning, students may only enter the building through the Academy Street, Parker Avenue, or Valley Street entrances.
5. During lunch periods, students may only use the Parker Avenue or Valley Street entrances.

6. Students are only allowed to wear masks that protect against respiratory infections; ski masks and/or full-face gaters may not be worn.

The Code of Conduct will be applied to any students who are unable to follow safety precautions and procedures.

Students will continue to be required to show their identification card upon entrance and either present or wear their ID while on school grounds. As an extra precaution moving forward, any student without an ID card must enter the building using the front door on Parker Street. If your child does not currently have their ID, please fill out this [Google form](#) by 10 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 25th, to request that one be created and ready for them on Monday morning. Students are encouraged to report during first period conference when new ID cards will be distributed.

Together, we will continue to make sure that Columbia High School is a safe and welcoming place to learn and work.

Sincerely,



Dr. Kevin F. Gilbert
Acting Superintendent of Schools
The School District of South Orange and Maplewood