

Statement by Secretary Spellings on Report to President Bush on American Schools' Safety

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U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings today made the following statement regarding the Report to the President on Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy.

"Nothing is more important to Americans than the safety of their children. That is why President Bush asked for recommendations on preventing school violence following the events at Virginia Tech that united this nation in sorrow and shock.

"What we found in our meetings with students, law enforcement experts, community members, education and mental health professionals and state and local leaders all over the nation is safety is a shared responsibility that requires cooperation, communication and commitment on all sides.

"As our report shows, we can take key steps to enhance security at our places of learning while we protect our freedom and privacy. At the Department of Education, we can help parents, school officials, law enforcement professionals, emergency management grantees and state and local communities understand their rights and responsibilities on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and sharing information. We can ensure our colleges and universities have the emergency management planning resources that suit their needs and enhance students' safety. Working with the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, we can provide additional training and guidance to our schools and communities and expand our Safe Schools/Healthy Students program. And in cooperation with the Secret Service, we can explore research of targeted violence in schools and continue to share existing threat assessment methods. My Department will move forward on these recommendations and continue its search for ways to enhance security on our campuses.

"Let our tribute to those we lost in Virginia be our solidarity in forestalling tragedies such as the one that took their lives."

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