

News Release: PGCPSS Takes Action in Response to Child Sex Abuse Case

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For Immediate Release

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UPPER MARLBORO, MD – Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) is working closely with county partners and taking immediate actions to support the community and improve processes following the arrest of an employee from Judge Sylvania Woods Elementary School who was charged with multiple counts of child sex abuse.

“As a father, grandfather, and educator that has dedicated my life to the education and safety of students across the state of Maryland, my heart goes out to the families and victims at Judge Sylvania Woods Elementary School and the entire Glenarden community,” said Dr. Kevin M. Maxwell, Chief Executive Officer, during a press conference on February 10. “I, like many, was shocked, appalled, disgusted, and disheartened by the allegations that a former PGCPS employee harmed students and vulnerable children.”

The news conference provided an update on the case, as well as how the FBI and county agencies would partner throughout the investigation. Joined by Prince George’s County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III; Prince George’s County Police Department (PGPD) Interim Chief Hank Stawinski; Prince George’s County State’s Attorney Angela Alsobrooks; and Prince George’s County Board of Education Chair Dr. Segun C. Eubanks, Dr. Maxwell outlined a number of actions the school system has taken to immediately support victims and the school community, and what will be done moving forward to ensure the safety of students.

At the administrative level, PGCPS leaders met with the Judge Sylvania Woods community to share information on the incident and review policies and procedures for reporting abuse and suspicious activity. Counseling and psychological support will be provided to students and families upon request, and those services will remain in place as long as they are needed. A second meeting will take place at the school this evening.

Dr. Maxwell will also convene a taskforce of internal and external partners to review current policies and procedures and identify areas of immediate improvement. The district will also consult with national experts in this field to ensure the taskforce recommendations are aligned with best practices from across the country.

Next week, staff from the PGCPS Office of General Counsel will address principals during a systemic principals’ meeting and review all laws, policies, and procedures related to an employee’s obligation to report abuse and suspicious behavior.

At the school level, principals will hold mandatory meetings with staff to review the August 2015 training materials and October 2015 memorandum on procedures for reporting abuse and suspicious activities. Professional school counselors will reach out to students and conduct lessons in the classroom that address the differences between appropriate and inappropriate physical contact; personal body safety rules and when to use them; and how to identify trusted adults to whom they can report when they feel unsafe.

“We will work closely with our community partners and use all possible resources to foster a safe and supportive environment for all students and families,” added Dr. Maxwell. “It goes without saying that these type of acts are intolerable and unacceptable.”

If parents or community members have any information regarding this case, they should call 1-800-CALL-FBI (1-800-225-5324).

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Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), one of the nation's 20th largest school districts, has 201 schools and centers, more than 133,000 students and nearly 20,000 employees. The school system serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities located in the Washington, DC suburbs. PGCPS is nationally recognized for college and career-readiness programs that provide students with unique learning opportunities, including dual enrollment and language immersion.

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