

MONTROSE DAILY PRESS

MCSD furthers training in Safe2Tell

By Monica Garcia monicag@montrosepress.com

Mar 1, 2019



At far left, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser and, second from right, Montrose High School Vice Principal and Montrose County School District Safety Director Jim Pavlich and MCSD Transition Coordinator Matt Jenkins next to him at the Safe2Tell training in Denver on Monday and Tuesday.

At the beginning of the month, an Olathe High School student allegedly made a threatening comment involving the school. The threat was reported to authorities through the Safe2Tell program.

“I think here, locally, we’ve seen that it’s a very effective tool, and we’ll continue to try to implement and take advantage of it,” said Montrose County School District Transition Coordinator Matt Jenkins.

Jim Pavlich, Montrose High School vice principal, who is set to become the MCSD safety director, Jenkins and MSCD school social worker Jim Jackett traveled to Denver for Safe2Tell training. The training, held Monday and Tuesday, covered lesson plans designed for each grade level, which will be taught to all grade levels throughout the school year.

The Safe2Tell program was put in place about 20 years ago after the school shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. It is a program that allows students throughout Colorado to anonymously report anything that they see or hear that is troubling. Reports include substance abuse, campus threats, suicide or anything that they feel adults or law enforcement should know about, Jenkins said.

The service falls under the office of the attorney general. After a student reports something, a dispatch center receives the reports and sends them to local dispatcher, district administrators and security teams.

The school district was invited to attend this training by the Colorado Department of Education.

To get the information and instruction out to students, Safe2Tell at this training said it is better to have talks throughout the year using small lessons rather than one big assembly at the beginning, Jenkins said. There is a range of units and lessons that address everything from healthy relationships to campus security threats, he added.

“I think that Safe2Tell is really a nationwide best practice for K-12 school safety,” Pavlich said.

During the second day of training, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser spoke to the group. Jenkins said they mentioned to Weiser that here on the Western Slope, residents and students don’t get as much attention, resources or focus as those on the Front Range.

Weiser assured the group that, in terms of Safe2Tell and student safety, this is a top priority for him and he will make sure the Western Slope is included.

The region is uniquely faced with adult and child suicidal ideation, Jenkins said. Suicide needs to be addressed to keep kids safe, he added.

While at the training, Jenkins said a rep from the Discovery Canyon Campus were present. In 2017, the school had seen six suicides in 13 months, he said, adding the school rep alluded that Safe2Tell was an effective way that they tried to counter that trend.

at spoke on his experience with the program, how it helped him and the youth perspective.

To Jenkins, the lesson plans appear to be effective.

“Periodic instructional pieces throughout the school year are going to be far more effective than a one-and-done assembly at the beginning of the year,” Jenkins said. “I think it’s good we do assemblies and it’s that we have a large group presentation informing the whole campus of this resource but it’d be better if we can break it down into small groups and have some tailored lessons toward the different needs and the different challenges facing our kids.”

To help share the message of Safe2Tell, Jenkins said the most important thing is getting all district staff on the same page in terms of messaging. The core concept that was addressed at the training was children having a trusted adult to talk to, and if they don’t, Safe2Tell is a good resource to anonymously keep themselves and peers safe.

“Student safety is our primary concern,” Jenkins said. “That is our first responsibility is to keep all students in Montrose County School District safe. We’re constantly trying to improve our systems and this is a statewide tool that we hope to increase awareness of and make sure that our kids are able to use Safe2Tell.”

At MHS, Pavlich said Safe2Tell info can be seen on student IDs, during talks with kids throughout the year and on posters throughout the buildings.

“The more you can break the code of silence, the more you can get kids to share their concerns, the safer we’re all going to be in our schools. I think this program is one way of attacking that is one supported by Colorado State Patrol, Colorado Information Analysis Center, the attorney general’s office and all the school districts in the state. It makes sense to use it and promote it.”

Jenkins said they are still in the planning stages for how this information will be disbursed. Each building will then work with Pavlich on how get the information to the students. Pavlich said these Safe2Tell tools should be taught to staff before the end of the school year.

By state statute this program has to be anonymous. There are a number of ways to use Safe2Tell: safe2tell.org, 877-542-7233, or the Safe2Tell app. The app even allows students to create a case number and stay up to date on what has happened with their tip.

Monica Garcia is the news editor at the Montrose Daily Press.