



POLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Timothy L. Wright, Sheriff

Polk County Schools and Polk County Sheriff's Office Joint Statement on Illegal Drugs in Schools

Monday, November 28, 2022

For Immediate Release

COLUMBUS, NC- The Polk County Sheriff's Office and the Polk County School System are working together to keep our schools a safe and conducive educational environment for all Polk County students. In response to several incidents of illegal drug activity in the schools and involving students, the Polk County Schools Administration reached out to the Sheriff's Office to establish ongoing processes for early detection and elimination of illegal drugs entering the schools, and also in continuing to build upon existing drug abuse prevention measures.

For safety and security purposes not, every process can be discussed in detail publicly, but some of the steps being taken at this time include random K-9 deployments within the schools, the implementation of a School Resource Deputy (SRD) at each Polk County Schools campus, and training for school personnel on early detection and identification techniques for potential illegal drug abuse. The Sheriff's Office and Schools will continue to provide education on good decision making to our students in partnership with other public and private organizations, and both the Sheriff's Office and Schools encourage any students, parents, friends, and family members who have concerns about potential drug abuse involving a loved one to reach out to School and Sheriff's Office personnel.

"Illegal drug use is a national epidemic, and as Sheriff and the parent of two children attending Polk County Schools, I am going to work with the school administration to provide every resource possible to combat these issues," said Sheriff Tim Wright. "Our command staff and the School Resources Division are constantly assessing the effectiveness of our operations within the schools," Sheriff Wright continued, "and we want the public to understand that while our role is legally very limited within the schools, we continue to work with school staff to properly use their authority to address these situations."

"Unfortunately drugs and addiction impact every community," said Superintendent Aaron Greene. "We are thankful to have the support of the Polk County Sheriff's Office



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and other agencies as we deal with these types of incidents. They have provided staff training, helped with drug prevention efforts, and responded quickly when called. We appreciate their involvement and support and will continue to rely on them in this work. It will take us all working together and supporting each other to address these problems.”

Polk County Schools reminds students and families to say something if they see something. There is a link on the main District webpage for the Sandy Hook “Say Something” app that allows for anonymous reporting of things like someone threatening to do harm to themselves or others, or any possibility of illegal activity. People can also contact the school principal, the School District Office, or the Sheriff’s Office directly if they have information to give.

Polk County Schools also wants students and families to know counseling services are available and ready should they be needed to deal with addiction or treating stress or anxiety from a situation a student may have experienced or encountered. Again, reaching out to the student’s Principal or Guidance Counselor is the quickest way to access these counseling services.

Illegal drug abuse is not an issue that any single entity can eliminate, and both the Polk County Sheriff’s Office and the Polk County Schools intend to continue taking all legal steps in addressing the issue while working with all public and private partners to identify any additional resources in this fight.