Columbine Middle School, as it appeared in 2018. A student allegedly threatened the school and has been suspended, according to school officials and police.
The Montrose police chief credits a Columbine Middle School student with doing the right thing by reporting a threat allegedly made against the school and those in it.

In interests of the investigation, Chief Blaine Hall could not disclose the precise nature of the threat, the report of which was made over the weekend.

Hall said one student overheard another student making threats against the school, students and staff. The student reported what he or she overheard to a parent, who then contacted police and school officials.

“I would like to commend that student for telling their parents. I would like to encourage all students who overhear these types of threats to immediately notify their teacher and their parent. It’s very important,” Hall said.

The police department was able to identify the other student and contacted that student’s family; Hall said the parents of this student also were cooperative.

The student has been suspended from school pending the investigation, Hall said.

The matter is being investigated as interference with a school facility and/or staff, a class-one misdemeanor, although charging decisions are ultimately the purview of the District Attorney’s Office.

Operating procedures allowed for the school district to be involved throughout the investigation and move toward appropriate discipline for the student, said Jim Pavlich, Montrose High School vice principal, who is set to become the MCSD safety director. The school district takes every threat seriously and they have a duty to communicate to the community what is going on, he said.

“We are following our district protocols around threats,” Pavlich said, adding that students and staff are safe.

The district reminds the public that speculating about such incidents and spreading rumors is unhelpful. Parents and students are encouraged to report potential threats of violence.

“I think in general, most everyone takes these very seriously,” Hall said. “If you hear of a threat made against a school or individual or population in our community and you don’t report it, shame on you.”

In this case, Pavlich said he was impressed that a concerned family member and student came forward. Officials had a report they could start investigating immediately, he added.

“People are coming forward and taking ownership of their own safety which is exactly what we want to happen,” Pavlich said.
People should not become complacent just because there have been a number of reported school threats in the past year, Hall also said.

The most recent reported threat occurred in February, when a young teen allegedly said he wanted to shoot up Olathe High School. The Montrose County Sheriff’s Office determined the youth did not have weapons when they located him; he reportedly said he’d been joking. He was detained at Grand Mesa Youth Services. Because he is a juvenile, the outcome of his case was not immediately known.

“You have to treat every (threat) as a big deal. The one time we don’t, the failure could be catastrophic,” Hall said.

“Conversely, that goes for our citizens, too. Everyone has to take the (issue) seriously, period,” he said.

Pavlich emphasised the same point.

“Ultimately what makes us is our students, staff and community caring and having the courage to come forward when they’re worried about something and share what it is they’re worried about so we can investigate it,” Pavlich said. “If a kid is in crisis, we want to get them help.”

Report threats to schools by calling 911, or make an anonymous report through Safe2Tell, safe2tell.org; 1-877-542-7233, or download the Safe2Tell app.

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