

## **Superintendent's Letter Parental Notification on Safety and Security**

September 25, 2019

Dear Parents, Students and Staff:

The West Middlesex Area School District is responding to the continued national concerns about potential threats by working to ensure two things: (1) that our schools have crisis plans and/or comprehensive multi-hazard plans in place, ready for quick and confident activation; and (2) that we are training our faculty, staff, students and emergency responders to deal with threats and emergency events that we hope never happen in our community.

We are assisting principals and school staff in preparing for a variety of emergency response situations. We are taking proactive measures to protect the safety of all our students and staff members. In addition, we are coordinating efforts with the Shenango Township Police Department, Mercer County Public Safety, emergency responders, medical services, and mental health officials. Depending on the nature of an emergency, we would respond according to our plans for potential threats and will follow directions from public safety officials. Information on safety and security is located in the 2019-2020 Student-Parent Handbooks, which can be found on our website under the "Student" link.

The actions taken during any type of emergency situation depend a great deal on the specifics of the incident. For example, one or more school buildings may evacuate, lock down, or initiate a shelter-in-place response according to the nature and location of the threat. **Parents should know that access to schools during an incident will be restricted for a variety of reasons. In such instances, we will utilize district media resources, such as our phone contact system, and other messaging platforms that we may have at our disposal, to provide information to you and those on the student *Emergency Contact Information Sheet*. PLEASE MAKE SURE WE ALWAYS HAVE UPDATED EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION. The school collects this information on the *Emergency Contact Information Sheet* at the beginning of each school year, but can be updated at any time by contacting the school offices.**

We will also coordinate with the local media to get information to you. It is important that you remain aware of public notices on radio, television, and the internet about emergency procedures and updates. In any case, student and staff safety is our first priority. All procedures are designed for their protection.

In the meantime, the stress of a crisis can be a problem for children and adults, and we have trained professionals ready to assist students and faculty in dealing with the aftermath of a crisis. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has gathered information resources for crisis response, terrorism, and mental health, including tips for parents. This information is updated frequently on the Department of Education's Crisis Response website. In addition, links to federal, state, and county safety information are available at this website.

To date, the District has had a strong approach to safety and security. Recently, we modified our district calendar to add October 16 as a 3-hour early dismissal Act 80 Day. This time will be allocated to address safety and security training for faculty and staff. Future training will incorporate students and other community resources.

The Pennsylvania State Police Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team recently conducted a safety and security audit of district facilities. Their expertise and recommendations are a valuable resource for our school.

Other items that the district has undertaken include:

- Strict compliance with all pre-employment mandates.
- All faculty and staff must undergo cyclical training in suicide prevention, mandated child welfare reporting, Student Assistance, Act 44 Safety and Security Regulations.
- Training is scheduled with the Pennsylvania State Police, along with the Shenango Township Police and Mercer County Emergency Operations, to conduct a Run-Hide-Fight Training with our faculty and staff.
- Established a safety and security team to address the needs of the district.
- Trained all students to use the Safe2Say System to anonymously report issues and concerns. Information on Safe2Say can be found on our website and is attached to this letter.
- Trained and certified members of the safety and security team in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS).
- Conducted internal audits to assist with safety and security planning and preparation.
- Developed and revised safety and security manuals, flip charts and all hazards manuals.
- Key administrators and staff have been certified as ALICE trainers.
- Conducted safety drills such as severe weather response, bus evacuations, fire drills and lockdown drills.
- School Resource and School Security Officers have completed the National School Resource Officer Certification Program (NASRO).
- Conducted Stop the Bleed Training for all district faculty and staff.
- Procured via grant award: Installed two-way communication system in and between transportation units, key safety and security personnel and administration.
- Modified the entrance patterns for building visitors by creating double-stop before gaining access to offices.
- Procured via grant award: Utilization of a visitor management system called Fast-Pass K-12. Fast-Pass will conduct instant background checks via a driver's license or state ID before visitors can enter buildings. The system will also generate a picture badge for visitors. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO CARRY A DRIVER'S LICENSE OR VALID STATE ID WHEN VISITING THE SCHOOL. More details about Fast Pass are posted on our website under the "Parent" link.**

The safety issues confronting our nation and communities are serious. Although sometimes we may think measures are inconvenient and disruptive, I want to assure you that the safety and welfare of our school community and your children are a top priority for me and the district. I know that parents, students, and staff will work together to help maintain a focus on teaching and learning in our schools as we continue to align our practices with the safety and security operations of our district.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation as we work together to ensure the safest environment for our students, staff and community.

Respectfully,

Raymond C. Omer