

SWEDESBORO-WOOLWICH SCHOOL DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

15 FREDRICK BOULEVARD

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Kristin P. O'Neil, Ed. D
Superintendent of Schools

Christopher J. DeStratis
School Business Administrator

August 2019

Dear SWSD Community,

Unfortunately, we are reminded each year about the critical need for districts to adhere to the most stringent security measures to protect our students and staff. I am sure, like me, you have had some sleepless nights thinking about these scary events or you have sat in disbelief thinking about the conversation(s) that you have had or will have with your child. During this time of worry, I wanted to share with you how the Swedesboro-Woolwich School District prepares for such events.

District Preparation and Procedures:

- Each school has an official emergency plan that is reviewed by our local police department and submitted to the Prosecutor's Office.
- The District will host two Class 3 Officers to assist with security plan management as well as on-site safety and security concerns.
- Every month all schools practice a minimum of two unannounced safety/emergency drills. These drills include: fire drills, lock down drills, evacuation drills, weather drills, etc.
- The District has an internal and external camera system that is capable of being accessed by our local police department in the event of an actual emergency.
- The District routinely discusses school and district safety procedures in various committee structures. Staff have been trained on ways to save lives through a program called, "Stop the Bleed," and we have benefitted from various professional development sessions. As a staff, we have even learned directly from a Sandy Hook Connecticut State Police Officer.

The District is very fortunate to collaborate frequently with the Woolwich Police Department. The Chief of Police (or a designated official) and I directly correspond during emergencies. The District does not receive our updates from social media or online media coverage. We receive the timeliest and most accurate information/guidance directly from our first responders, and as such, our information may be different from what you are read on Facebook or online.

It is also important to be aware that our two Class 3 Officers are housed in our District; the officers regularly visit all buildings, and our officers even spend time playing with the kids during recess. Viewing officers on-site is a routine occurrence and does not signal a problem or serious situation.

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Lock Down and Evacuations:

- The school will communicate with all parents through the school messenger system (telephone, email, and text). We will also communicate via our social media pages. It is very important that you make sure your contact information is always maintained, up-to-date, and you have identified how you prefer to be notified.
- It is important to understand that our very first priority is to ensure the safety of all of our students and staff, and it is equally important to communicate *accurate* information with everyone. Unfortunately, sometimes rumors and/or community personal observations are posted on social media before the school can relay accurate information to the community. The District assures you that the school will communicate with all parents as quickly as possible. However, ensuring the safety of everyone within our buildings must be our first priority and communication is second.
- The District also requests that you refrain from participating in online rumor sharing. Inaccurate information creates undue anxiety throughout the community. Inaccurate information is not helpful information.
- Please keep in mind, if you choose to call the school to gain up-dated information, there will be many other parents doing the same. You may not be able to reach someone in the office right away because the staff will be fielding an abundance of parental phone calls. Some of our offices only have one or two individuals available to manage the phones.
- Teachers will NOT be permitted to share information of any kind during an emergency. Therefore, teachers and staff will not be sending out emails, texts, or social media posts (including Dojo updates). If you contact a teacher during an emergency, that staff member will not be permitted to respond back to you until the emergency has ended. Staff will be happy to respond once the situation has resolved.
- If there is a need to evacuate students and staff to an off-site location, the District will notify you where you may meet your child. Upon arrival, parents will be directed to the check-in area. You will then be escorted to a “waiting area.”
- In the event that we need to implement our reunification plan, please realize that this will take time. We could have several hundred students who need to be reunited with their families. It is important to note that this will be a stressful situation for our staff, too. A significant level of patience and understanding will be required if this plan is to be enacted. You may be waiting in the designated “waiting area” for a significant amount of time.
- As parents arrive and check in to the reunification site, school staff will require you to present identification. You will have to provide this information several times so please have your ID handy. Students will only be released to individuals named as emergency contacts in OnCOURSE. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone not listed in OnCOURSE as an emergency contact. We apologize in advance, as this most certainly would be a highly charged emotional situation. However, understanding in advance that we will not release children to

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family friends, neighbors, etc. if their name is not listed in the Emergency Contacts List will greatly assist in the on-site confusion.

I know that if such an emergency was to take place your first thought would be to immediately rush to the school, get your child, and take him/her home. Please understand that in the event of a lock down drill or an actual lock down, no one (other than emergency personnel) will be permitted to enter the building until we receive an all clear. (In fact, in an actual emergency, emergency personnel will block off all access to our parking lots.) All building doors will remain locked during a real or practice lock-down drill, and no parent, visitor, child, or staff member will be permitted to enter or exit the premises.

It is best to resist the urge to report to the school right away. As hard as it will be for every parent and loved one, please understand that the school needs to allow all emergency personnel to get to the scene first to do their jobs.

As Superintendent, it is important that you know I care deeply about your children, the staff, and this District. Ensuring the safety of this District is of critical importance to me and every member of our staff. It is essential that we maintain as controlled of an environment as possible.

Sincerely,
Dr. Kristin P. O'Neil
Swedesboro-Woolwich School Superintendent

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