

September 22, 2010

Dear Parents – I know today was startling and unnerving for many of our families and students. We take student safety very seriously and are deeply committed to doing everything possible to ensure that. I am so proud of our high school students- they handled themselves very well – this did not go unnoticed by the many emergency personnel who arrived at the campus. I know that a number of the alerts that went out contained specific information – however, I’d like to clarify and re-cap the day for you. Today, when the HS administration was notified that a serious threat was found on a girls bathroom stall, I was immediately notified. The police were called and arrived within minutes. We implemented our evacuation procedures – we dismissed the children to their “Fire drill” locations for attendance and then moved the students to the MS turf field. We implemented proper procedures for the use of MS bathrooms – ensuring MS and HS student safety was maintained. We placed staff at all entrances of the campus. This took place in a very quick and orderly fashion. I understand that technology in this era can be a true bonus in terms of getting information out in a timely manner. The K-12 Alert system was used and messages were posted to the web-site. Unfortunately, sometimes cell phones used by students can be a vehicle for sending out inaccurate information. The students told us that they were hungry so we announced that pizza had been ordered for all. The students were very receptive to the idea of food. Naturally the arrival of certain emergency vehicles was frightening to many HS and MS students. The sense of anxiety was heightened by the News Channel 12 Helicopter hovering over our campus throughout the day. The large number of official vehicles that arrived on the scene had to do with the fact that the County had scheduled an emergency training drill for today. The County sent the team to assist the local police. We are thankful for their prompt attention. Mrs. Ossowski spoke to the MS classes to allay their fears. Dr. Hendrickson and Mr. Fonde discussed the situation with the HS students. We did not implement an emergency dismissal process for the HS as the police were estimating that we would be back in the building within an hour –an hour and a half. We were VERY concerned about compromising student safety during an emergency dismissal –the possibility of accidents or sending children home to an empty house mid-day. However, we did follow our normal dismissal procedures. These are part of the forms sent home each year to HS parents. The normal procedures include the following - a parent could sign their child out, a Jr /Sr who had afternoon schedules that allowed them to leave and written permission had been given were dismissed or 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders who had permission to leave if they did not have a 9<sup>th</sup> period class. Of course, as this is the start of school, we did not have all paperwork returned to us. Again, we did not issue an emergency dismissal but as the academic day was drawing to conclusion, students who had permission to walk home were dismissed. By 2:30 the majority of the police had left, they found nothing reported the area was clean. The HS – with the exception of the Hallway where the bathroom with the threat is located was – opened by 3PM. The police are investigating the bathroom as a crime scene and are also investigating a suspicious and threatening Facebook posting. Tomorrow we will have a regular day of school –however, the following precautions are in place. The police will be present and a detective will be with the HS administration when the students are addressed. We will bring the faculty in for an early meeting. It will be a D day – a repeat of today and period 3 will be the first period class. As many of the students left their belongings at school – the classrooms have been all locked down tonight and the building is closed to all after school activities. Tomorrow Mrs. Ossowski and Mrs. Galotti will speak to

their counseling staff and make sure that the children's fears, concerns and/or anxieties are addressed. I will send another update out tomorrow and we will have a presentation about the incident and the response at the next BOE meeting on Tuesday, Sept 28<sup>th</sup>. The Board, administration and I want to make sure all the information we have is shared in a timely and appropriate fashion. Again, I want to assure you that the health and safety of your children is my highest priority. I will continue to keep you informed of our efforts and emergency plans. Together we will ensure that the schools remain safe! I thank the local, county and state police for their efforts in ensuring the safety of our children. Mary