



# PINE HILL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Central Administration

1003 Turnerville Road ▲ Pine Hill, New Jersey 08021

856.783.6900 ▲ 856.783.2955 [Fax]

Melissa Williams, Ed.D., Superintendent

Cherie Bratty, Ed.D., Business Administrator

April 11, 2024

Dear Pine Hill School District Community Members, Staff, and Students,

I would like to respond to the recent perceived threats to the middle school and the perception and concerns regarding how the district handles such threats.

When a threat is reported to the school district, the Pine Hill Police are immediately contacted and an investigation begins. While the investigation is in process, the school district cannot communicate information. We realize that this can be frustrating or give the appearance that the threat is being ignored, but we cannot rush or control the investigative process. Thus, not hearing anything from the district does not mean we are not working to keep kids safe. Once we receive information from the police and a determination has been made, we are then able to share that information with the public. Please know, we cannot share specifics about the investigation, information about the minors and/or students involved, the outcome in relation to said students, or the discipline thereafter. What the district can say is whether the investigation found the threat to be credible or not. When law enforcement states that the threat is *not* credible, the district must trust and follow their guidance. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to the Pine Hill Police Department.

We want to thank everyone who alerted the police and district to recently rumored threats. I would ask that before heading to social media to post or repost information or share individual frustrations, that you consider that this could not only contribute to the panic and fear that our students, parents/guardians and staff may be experiencing, but it could also place our students in harm's way. Recently a social media post (that was already investigated, addressed and found not to be credible) was repurposed and sent out as another "threat". While we worked to investigate the new post, the conversations continued on social media where a student's name was mentioned with opinions on how the student should be treated and the incident handled; this does not assist the district or police, in any fashion, in these types of situations.

What can assist the district is using the established PHSD Assessment and Care Team (ACT). This team was formed in response to state legislation which provides teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in identifying students with behaviors of concern, assessing those students' risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and delivering intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk. This teams' purpose is also to prevent targeted violence in the school and to ensure a safe and secure school environment that enhances the learning experience for all members of the school community.



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Our team consists of administrators, teachers, counselors, and our law enforcement partners. This team receives tips and immediately acts on them to ensure the safety of the student population, including the safety of the person who may be at-risk for demonstrating these behaviors. Our team identifies the best course of action on a case-by-case basis, which could include mental health counseling, a search of belongings, parental contact and support, law enforcement involvement, special needs interventions and more.

The Assessment and Care Team has also partnered with Sandy Hook Promise's [Say Something Anonymous Reporting System](#) that has provided students training on recognizing the signs and signals of at-risk behaviors, taking those signs and signals seriously, and reporting them to the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System. This crisis center is staffed 24/7/365, and students and members of the community can submit tips via mobile app, the website, or a telephone hotline. More information can be found on the [Pine Hill School District Website](#). Please don't hesitate to use this anonymous 24/7 resource if you see or hear of a threat to the school district, a threat to another student, or to themselves. As always, you can also reach out to the Pine Hill Police Department.

As a district, we are going to reinforce to our students that posting on social media about the "threat", sending a "snap" to their friends, spreading hearsay, etc... does not help with the investigation or assist in calming any rumor-induced panic. We would appreciate it if you could take the time to speak with your children about this as well.

Together we can ensure the safety of our students, staff, and community.

Sincerely,

Melissa Williams, Ed.D.  
Superintendent